



EMALS & AAG

LAUNCHING A NEW ERA
OF NAVAL AVIATION



Cover: The future of Naval Aviation is taking shape on board USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) pictured underway in the Atlantic Ocean, 29 Oct '19.

Photo: USN, MC3 Connor Loessin



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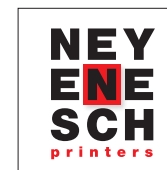
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BRIEF

A new decade dawns with a global challenge unlike any other we have seen in our lifetimes. It seems every hour brings new revelations and restrictions in response to the COVID-19 virus. That said, our association is pressing forward in full preparation for Hook '20 in September. We are considering contingencies, like any good strike planner, but I repeat *WE ARE STILL PLANNING TO CONDUCT HOOK '20 AS BRIEFED*. Chaser and the staff are reacting to continually evolving restrictions in California, but preparations for the symposium continue unabated.

From the Chairman Building Tomorrow's Team

by RADM Don "D.Q." Quinn, USN(Ret)

We have a new association president. CAPT Eric "Popeye" Doyle turned over command of the *Blue Angels* in November and now has the lead. He is fired up and excited to be the active-duty lead for both the Association and the Tailhook Educational Foundation.

The theme for this year's symposium is the Naval Air Training Command. Their last four months have been very eventful, but we will reach back much further to recall the training and stories of the past, share what instructors are seeing today, and preview changes coming in the future training of Naval Aviators. It promises to be another large event as vendor spaces in Reno are already booked up.

Much has changed in the training of Naval Aviators, even since *Desert Storm* in 1991. The primary flight training aircraft is much more capable and demanding, topping out at 310 knots, vice 170, while displaying much more data to the aviators. That can be both a good and a bad thing as they learn to prioritize and compartmentalize. And there is the ever-present instructor temptation to rush into graduate level tactics before

USN

students have mastered "blocking and tackling." There is also greater pressure than ever to leverage the growing effectiveness of simulation in place of flight time. That topic alone should provide plenty of opportunities for spirited discussion at Hook '20.

The Navy just announced selection of a new helicopter for rotary-wing training. Replacing the venerable Bell TH-57 *Sea Ranger* and its "steam-powered gauges" will be Leonardo's TH-119, a single-engine, IFR rated helicopter with a state of the art glass cockpit. Designated the TH-73, it will clearly present opportunities to raise the bar in initial rotary-wing pilot training while reducing time to train.

Naval Flight Officers (NFOs) today are learning communications brevity that was once the domain of the Navy Fighter Weapons School. E-2, P-8 and E-6 NFOs are leaving the training command with extensive knowledge in the respective tactics, techniques, and terminology of their new communities. Where do we draw the line between fleet training and undergraduate, or "basic" training? There will be plenty to talk about this fall and, as always, no shortage of passion. That's why we sponsor the symposium.

We will keep a weather eye on world events as we prepare for Hook '20. I hope you will plan to join us in Reno. In the meantime, you are all in my thoughts and prayers. Many of our Naval Aviation heroes fall in the high-risk demographic, please keep them particularly in your thoughts and prayers. When we recover from this event, and we will, we will draw upon the fraternal ties inherent in this association to emerge stronger than ever. Until then, stay safe. *I'll see you all in Reno!*



RADM Don "D.Q." Quinn, USN(Ret)



A VAQ-140 Patriots EA-18G Growler flies over USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), 13 Jan '20. The NAS Pensacola shooting victims' names are painted on the jet.

“Where did we get such men?” The words penned by author James Michener in his book *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* are repeated often in speeches and other writings and present the special characteristics required of a carrier aviator, especially in combat. Nearly seven decades after the book's publication, men and women wearing Wings of Gold uphold the tradition of courage, skill, dedication and many other attributes that so inspired Michener when he visited carriers operating off Korea. This issue's articles reflect those proud traditions of the past and the spirit that is driving those of the present to push the envelope on board the Navy's newest nuclear-powered aircraft carriers.

From the Editor-in-Chief

As we enter the year commemorating the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II, Barrett Tillman recounts Task Force 58's strikes against Tokyo on 16-17 February 1945. Not since the Doolittle Raid in early 1942 had aircraft launched from a carrier flight deck to attack Japan, but those two days demonstrated the ability of the Navy's fast carriers to project power from the sea, suppressing enemy air defenses and hitting an array of targets. It is an enduring capability demonstrated time and again in Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East and the tip of the spear today.

At the forefront of many of these combat actions was a squadron that celebrates its 75th anniversary this year—the VFA-192 *Golden Dragons*. We tell the story of the squadron's formation during World War II, its combat actions in Korea flying the venerable F4U *Corsair* and the heroic mission of Medal of Honor recipient LCDR Michael Estocin. Also, not many squadrons can say that they shared the Hollywood screen with the likes of William Holden, Grace Kelly and Mickey Rooney, but the SSHWFGD can!

This issue's cover story written by CAPT John "Yank" Cummings provides a summary of recently completed testing on board USS *Gerald R. Ford* (CVN 78), seeks to correct some misconceptions about the innovative carrier and highlights some of the changes those destined to serve on board the ship can expect. Appropriately, he speaks to the collective courage of a Navy that pushed the envelope with the *Ford*-class and continues to work hard to make the ship ready to deploy as the latest successor to VADM Marc Mitscher's flattops assembled off Japan that February three quarters of a century ago.



Hill Goodspeed

Continuing our coverage of the Naval Air Training Command, the theme of Hook '20, we thought it would interest you to see how some of the legends of Naval Aviation did when they were flight students. We hope you enjoy insights into VADM William F. Halsey Jr., CAPT David McCampbell and others drawn from the pages of their training records from NAS Pensacola. You might realize that the instructional flight you took back in the day was not as bad as you had thought!

Finally, we introduce a new feature in this issue called "On Deck," which you can find just inside the back cover. Whether it is words of wisdom from past and present figures in Naval Aviation, a unique tale from Naval Aviation history or a "rest of the story" behind a photograph, it will literally and figuratively be the last word for every issue. This first "On Deck" links a famous image to the recent name chosen for the fourth *Ford*-class carrier and the enduring legacy of the Battle of Midway. We hope you enjoy it.

Bell-Boeing



The first CMV-22B Osprey carrier onboard delivery aircraft during a test flight at the Bell-Boeing Amarillo, Texas, factory late last year. The aircraft was delivered to NAS Patuxent River for evaluation on 7 Feb '20.



If 2018 was a year of discovery for Naval Aviation and 2019 the year of results, then 2020 is the year of building combat lethality.

Two years ago, the Navy embarked on a journey to change how we build and sustain aircraft material readiness. We collaborated with industry partners and established the Naval Sustainment System-Aviation, marking the beginning of a reformation of the focus and mindset throughout the Naval Aviation Enterprise.



COMMANDER, NAVAL AIR FORCES

From the Air Boss Training to Win

by VADM DeWolfe H. Miller III, USN
Commander, Naval Air Forces

We saw results by the next year in readiness numbers that we had not seen in over a decade. After regularly maintaining 250–260 mission capable (MC) F/A-18s during the past 10 years, in September 2019 we surged to attain and exceed service MC goals of 341 *Super Hornet* and 93 *Growler* aircraft and now sustain on average more than 339 MC *Super Hornets*. Across Naval Aviation, we had approximately 340 more MC aircraft in February 2020 compared to February 2019.

Now in 2020, we must transform these MC rates into combat lethality and survivability. Under the National Defense Strategy, Naval Aviation is expanding from primarily supporting ground troops in conflict against terrorists to also preparing to win a major conflict against a peer enemy. In order to do this, Naval Aviation needs to maintain its edge by having the best-trained aviators in the world.

The Naval Aviation Warfighting Development Center (NAWDC) is the center of tactical excellence for the Navy and key to this training. The instructors at TOPGUN (strike fighter), CAEWWS (E-2 *Hawkeye* Weapons School), SEAWOLF (NAWDC rotary-wing weapons school), HAVOC (Airborne Electronic Attack Weapons School) and STRIKE (NAWDC integrated air wing training), as well as those at our aircraft specific weapons schools and Fleet Readiness Squadrons are an impressive group of forward-thinking warfighters, striving to maintain a decisive tactical edge over any peer adversary by ensuring we “train to win.” We’ve started leveraging live, virtual, constructive (LVC) capabilities, begun work on new air wing training facilities at NAS Fallon, revamped the air wing training syllabus and added a Maritime Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (MISR) syllabus, all to ensure we maintain the advantage and lethality over any adversary.

This era of great power competition demands the most advanced aircraft in the world. The carrier air wing (CVW) of the future will be more lethal, survivable, networked and sustainable, and armed with autonomous capabilities. It will defeat any threat using advanced and layered effects and integrate passive and active sensors providing battlespace awareness for strike group and fleet commanders.

Shortly after VFA-147 achieved safe-for-flight status last February, we officially declared that the F-35C *Lightning II* achieved Initial Operational Capability. The Marine Corps continued its march toward F-35C CVW employment as well. The Corps’ first F-35C squadron, VMFA-314, is on track to achieve safe-for-flight certification in March 2020 and remains postured to meet its subsequent deployment timeline. With stealth technology, advanced sensors and improved weapons capacity and range, it is the most lethal, survivable, connected and interoperable strike fighter aircraft ever built. Combined with the proven and continuously improving capabilities of the *Super Hornet* and advanced weapons, the CVW of the future certainly packs a punch.

The CMV-22B *Osprey* (the carrier onboard delivery replacement) made its first flight in December 2019, taking another step closer to integrating the versatility and flexibility this aircraft brings to the CVW. The *Osprey* has greater agility, range and cargo handling efficiencies than its C-2A *Greyhound* predecessor. The F-35C and CMV-22B are game

changing aircraft that are joining our carrier fleet and will deploy together on board USS *Carl Vinson* (CVN 70) for her next cruise.

The MQ-4C *Triton*, our unmanned, long-endurance maritime surveillance platform will directly support the *Vinson Carrier Strike Group* (CSG) when it deploys with the CMV-22B and F-35C. The inaugural deployment of *Triton* provides enhanced capabilities to fleet and strike group commanders and ships at sea. Coupling the capabilities of the MQ-4C with the proven performance of P-8A *Posiedon* and EP-3E *Orion* aircraft significantly increase maritime domain awareness and lethality.

Looking to the near future, the E-2D *Advanced Hawkeye* with enhanced airborne command and control capabilities is adding the ability to conduct aerial refueling, which greatly improves on-station time to the eyes and ears of a CSG. Over the next decade, this capability will expand throughout the E-2D fleet and onto every large-deck nuclear-powered aircraft carrier (CVN).

If that were not enough, the lethality of the CVW of the future will be augmented by another addition this decade—the MQ-25A *Stingray*. The *Stingray* is the Navy’s unmanned carrier-based tanker and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance aircraft. After achieving a successful first flight in September 2019, it is on a fast track to join the fleet.

If you haven’t noticed, Naval Aviation readiness is seeing exponential gains and the air wing of the future is coming ... and it’s coming to a theater near you soon.

The large-deck CVN remains the centerpiece of naval power. CSGs bring unparalleled combat power to the fight. No other weapon system, either in existence or on the drawing board, has the responsiveness, endurance, command and control capabilities and battlespace awareness of a CVN with its embarked air wing and accompanying cruisers and destroyers. Every near-peer competitor is trying to copy this dominant power projection capability, but none have achieved our level of success.

USS *Gerald R. Ford* (CVN 78), the first in class of the most advanced, lethal warships ever put to sea, is making great progress toward her first deployment. In January, *Ford* completed aircraft compatibility testing during which the crew launched and recovered 211 aircraft, testing five different airframes while using state-of-the-art flight-deck systems. The *Ford* class is designed for today’s air wing and the CVW of the future, and will provide a survivable class of ships with greater combat power. These ships will deliver greater sortie generation rates due to their larger, redesigned flight deck, improved servicing systems and built-in capabilities to launch and recover current and future CVW aircraft.

We are in an era of great power competition, and we operate our powerful Navy to ensure we can win without fighting, but are ready to fight and win decisively when required. Specifically, we operate forward such that when any adversaries wake up and look off their coastline, they see a lethal and ready U.S. Navy and say to themselves, “today is not the day to pick a fight.”

For the past two years, I have had the incredible honor to serve the Naval Aviation family as your Air Boss. I am humbled to serve alongside the incredibly talented aviators, aircrew, Sailors and Marines who keep our aircraft flying and nuclear-powered aircraft carriers steaming ... and their families. We are supported by amazing Naval Air Systems Command and Naval Supply Systems Command teammates as well as trusted industry partners. Being a part of Naval Aviation has never been more important or rewarding than it is today, and the role of the CVN and embarked CVW has never been more critical to the defense of our great nation.

This year we have already seen the benefits of all the hard work from past years, and I look forward to sharing even more successes with each of you.

2020 is the year of building combat lethality — let’s get to it!

We fly, We fight, We lead ... We Win!



VADM DeWolfe H. Miller III

The Future is Now

USAF, Christopher Okula



A VX-9 F-35C *Lightning II* flown by LT Daniel “Crib” Armenteros conducts the first live-fire test of an AIM-120 *Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missile* released from an operational *Joint Strike Fighter* during a flight over the Pacific, 24 Jan '19.

USN, MC3 Nikita Custer

Leonardo Aerospace



The addition of an aerial refueling capability in the E-2D *Advanced Hawkeye* expands the long-serving platform’s abilities to influence the battlespace.



The selection of the Leonardo TH-119 marks a major improvement in rotary-wing training. Its modern technology enhances the skills of aviators leaving the training command and joining the fleet.



In the Pentagon's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2021, the U.S. Navy made choices that officials said were necessary but likely will be rejected by Congress.

The biggest headline from the Navy's budget request is a proposal to buy eight ships; a steep reduction compared to 13 that Congress funded last year. In another major budgetary move, the Navy announced that FY '21 would be the last year it will fund the procurement of new *Super Hornet* strike fighters. The request seeks 24 aircraft but removes 36 that would have been acquired between 2022 and 2024. Those dollars will be redirected to the Next Generation Air Dominance program that seeks to develop a family of carrier-based manned and unmanned air platforms.

Washington Report:

Navy's 2021 Budget Cuts Ships, Shifts Money to Next-Gen Fighter

by Sandra I. Erwin

With regard to big-deck aircraft carriers, the budget seeks \$2.6 billion to fund construction of *Ford*-class ships CVN 80 and CVN 81 as part of the two-carrier buy the Navy awarded to Huntington Ingalls in January 2019.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Budget RADM Randy Crites said during a 10 February 2020 press conference that the service had to balance growing requirements for personnel, fleet readiness and equipment modernization within a tight budget. "The fiscal context for conducting the department's mission in this dynamic environment remains challenging," he said. The FY '21 request for the Department of the Navy (including both Navy and Marine Corps) is \$207.1 billion. In 2020 the enacted top line was \$210 billion.

The budget seeks \$17 billion for the procurement of new aircraft, which is \$2.5 billion less than what Congress appropriated for aircraft procurement in FY '20. In addition to the aforementioned F/A-18E/F figure, the FY '21 budget calls for the purchase of 21 carrier-based F-35C *Lightning IIs*, 10 short takeoff and vertical landing F-35Bs for the Marine Corps, four E-2D *Advanced Hawkeye* command and control aircraft, five KC-130J *Hercules* aerial refueling aircraft, seven CH-53K *King Stallion* helicopters, nine MV-22 *Osprey* tilt-rotor aircraft, 36 TH-73As in support of the Advanced Helicopter Training System and five VH-92A presidential helicopters.

USN, MC3 Ryan Carter



An EA-18G Growler assigned to VX-23 launches from USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) during aircraft compatibility testing on 27 Jan '20.

"As we complete the procurement of our current fleet of aircraft, the Navy's focused on maturing our CH-53K helicopter production, maintaining the F-35, E-2D and V-22 as well as the Advanced Helicopter Training System," said Crites.

The final order of *Super Hornets* will bring the total inventory to 641 aircraft. Navy budget justification documents conclude that this "ensures the carrier air wing will maintain capable strike fighter capacity to pace the most stressing threats through the 2030s." The final order of five *Advanced Hawkeyes* planned in Fiscal Year 2023 would bring the total program to 77.

The proposed FY '21 budget calls for no unmanned Naval Aviation platforms. Between 2023 and 2025, the Navy plans to buy 13 MQ-4C *Tritons* for naval surveillance and 12 MQ-25 *Stingrays* for aerial refueling.

"We do plan a pause on MQ-4 *Triton*," said Crites. This is to allow the new sensor design more time to mature in order to reduce future retrofit costs. The Navy already has ordered seven MQ-25s and will accept delivery beginning in 2021.

The Navy's budget proposal stirred strong reactions on Capitol Hill, especially its reduction in ship construction. Rep. Joe Courtney, D-Conn., chairman of the House Armed Services Committee's Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee, told *The CT Mirror* that this budget is "dead on arrival." He said a budget that only funds eight ships "does not square with the Navy's long-term defense plan, which calls for a three hundred fifty-five-ship fleet."

Defense Secretary Mark Esper said in an interview with *Defense News* that the Pentagon is committed to a 355-ship fleet but perhaps not a fleet of traditional naval vessels. "What we have to tease out is, what does that future fleet look like? I think one of the ways you get there quickly is moving toward lightly manned ships, which over time can be unmanned," Esper said. "We need to push much more aggressively. That would allow us to get our numbers up quickly, and I believe that we can get to three hundred fifty-five, if not higher, by 2030."

Ultimately Congress will decide what part of the Pentagon's Fiscal Year 2021 budget proposal it will support, and the Navy's request is likely to become the subject of a contentious debate over the coming months.



Sandra I. Erwin



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Hook '20

Tailhook's response to the current COVID-19 pandemic remains aligned with the nation's effort to successfully navigate through unprecedented times. We have adjusted working conditions here at the HQ to ensure the health and safety of the staff, but we remain open for business. While the landscape is changing daily, as of this writing planning for Hook '20 from 10-12 September at The Nugget

From the Executive Director

Casino Resort in Sparks, Nev., remains intact, and we encourage you to register and make your room reservations. You can register for Hook and reserve your accommodations all in one place by visiting our website www.tailhook.net. Room reservations have been available since January, and I encourage you to make yours now before The Nugget sells out. Tailhook's discount rate is valid only until 24 August, so don't delay. It doesn't cost anything to book a room, and if your plans change, you can cancel 24 hours prior to check-in. As a reminder, the discount price on rooms is an exceptional value as the going rates in the Reno area are significantly higher during the weekend of Hook. Please remember that everyone who attends Hook '20 needs to register and have a nametag for security and accountability purposes. In summary, please plan to join us for Hook '20. If anything changes after you have registered, we will refund your money. Hope to see all of you in Reno!

2020 Board of Directors Election

At our last Board of Directors meeting in March, our Nominations Committee discussed this year's election. We do not have anyone leaving the board this year, so our election will consist of three current board members who are eligible to serve another three-year term. The three incumbents, in alphabetical order, are:

- CAPT Scott "Topper" Farr, USN (Eligible for third term)
- ADM William "Shortney" Gortney, USN(Ret) (Eligible for second term)
- CDR Kristen "Dragon" Hanson, USN (Eligible for second term)

Voting will take place online from 1 May through 31 July with the results announced at Hook '20 during our Annual Membership Meeting on Saturday, 12 September. A short biography for each candidate will

USN, MC3 James Hong



A VFA-125 Rough Raiders F-35C Lightning II on approach to USS Nimitz (CVN 68) off Southern California, 18 Jan '20.

be posted on our website. Only regular members are eligible to vote, and each vote will be verified. I encourage all regular members to vote again this year.

Hook '20 Shirts

Hook '20 shirts are on sale now in The Ship's Store. Last year we offered a choice of a Hook polo and T-shirt. Most people purchased both. The symposium shirts look great, so get your polo, T-shirt or both today.

Looking Ahead

In case you haven't noticed, we've experienced considerable change over the past few years to include staff turnover, updating our administrative infrastructure to include our database, a new website, additional merchandise, headquarters building renovations, improving our footprint and look each year at Hook, as well as the composition of our board members and officers, just to name a few. The old adage of *change is hard* remains true today, which is why most people resist it. Nonetheless, keep in mind that all the changes made thus far have been for you—the member. We are 64 years strong due to extraordinary leadership in the past. Your present Tailhook leadership will continue to build on that foundation in order to secure the longevity and relevancy of an irreplaceable world-class organization. Our various committees, such as Strategy, Business Development, Membership and Social Media are all digging in to pave the road ahead for you, our members. We have both short- and long-term initiatives in work and we look forward to sharing them with you. For all the effort we are putting into your association, the only thing we ask of you is to keep your membership current, invite others to join, participate locally or join us at Hook and give us your feedback. It's an honor for all of us here on the staff to work for you.



CAPT Greg Keithley, USN(Ret)

CAPT Greg "Chaser" Keithley, USN(Ret)
Executive Director
The Tailhook Association



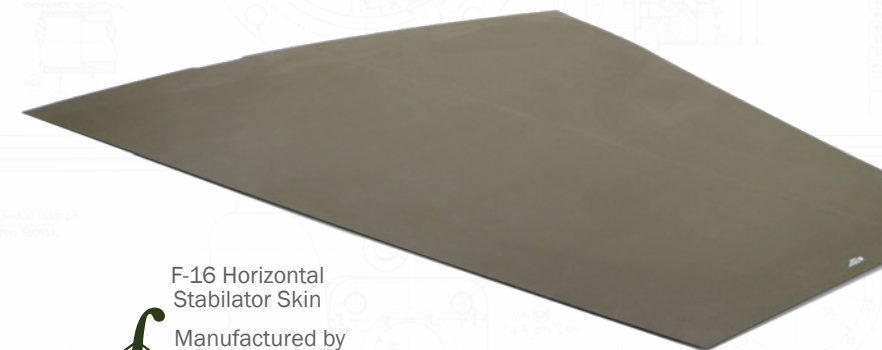
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TAILHOOK EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

Combined Federal Campaign No. 10251

Aloha Tailhookers,
Welcome to the early weeks of the scholarship season. TEF's scholarship application window opened 15 December and closed 2 March. Executive Assistant Beth Rollins is organizing the roughly 600 applications for our scholarship committee's review. Reviewing these *extremely competitive* applications takes several weeks. In May, we notify all applicants if they will receive a TEF 2020 grant or not. In June, based on merit-based ranking, we assign more than 100 awardees to a specific scholarship. In August, TEF issues a check to each awardee via their school's bursar office. And on 15 December 2020, the process begins again.

In the last issue of *The Hook* TEF Chairman of the Board RDML J.J. Quinn, USN(Ret) reminded us of the *nearly two percent increase each year in college costs*. To keep pace with these increases, TEF is compelled to increase our minimum scholarship by \$500 every five years. The last time we did this was in 2016, raising our minimum annual grant from \$2,000 to \$2,500. This, along with maintaining the centurion level of scholarships awarded, is why your continued generosity and patronage is so important.

There are several exciting new ways to plan a gift for TEF. In the future, look for more details on Planned Giving options such as:

- Annuity Trusts
- Charitable Lead Trusts
- Unitrusts
- Charitable Remainder Trusts
- Gift Annuity Agreements
- Gifts of Life Insurance
- Giving Non-cash Assets
- Giving through Retirement Plans
- Giving through your Will or Trust
- Revocable Living Trusts

If you'd like more information on any of these options, please visit the Planned Giving page on our website or feel free to call us.

In closing, we'd like to share some of the recent feedback from our nation's future leaders, your TEF 2019 scholarship awardees.

Vanderbilt University senior and four-time TEF awardee: *"I'm writing to thank you for your generous scholarship again this year. I'm an ecology, evolution and organismal biology major with a minor in scientific computing. I'm on track to graduate this spring summa cum laude and move into graduate programs studying infectious diseases. The TEF scholarships I've received over the past four years have empowered me to take this direction with my life. They have motivated me to succeed and to stay more in touch with my community and to work hard helping*

CAPT Sterling Gilliam, USN(Ret)

people in this critical field you've enabled me to pursue. For this, I will always remember Tailhook and I remain deeply grateful."

University of Virginia junior and two-time TEF awardee: *"I am humbled, honored and so deeply grateful to have received TEF scholarships these past two years. The grants from TEF's generous sponsors provide great encouragement and critical financial assistance to students across our nation. For my part, I will ensure your investment and confidence in me is well placed. Thank you again for your support."*



CAPT Rodger Welch, USN(Ret)

Southern Methodist University freshman: *"... I want to thank you so much for sponsoring the TEF scholarship I received last year. Your contributions to TEF scholarships over the years remain extremely generous, and in my case, allowed me to attend the school of my dreams — Southern Methodist University. My father was a Navy pilot based in San Diego and I've always relished his stories about Naval Aviation. At SMU I plan to study marketing at the Cox School of Business. Thank you for your service to our country and again, for your generosity in sponsoring a scholarship for students like myself."*

TEF greatly appreciates the unwavering, generous support of our individual benefactors, industry sponsors and organizational partners. Your contributions remain *critical* to ensuring we maintain the centurion scholarship level and grow the value of each scholarship for our nation's future leaders.

PS: Do you shop using Amazon? If so, please consider using the AmazonSmile option and choose the Tailhook Educational Foundation as your charity of choice. <https://smile.amazon.com>

Mahalos and 2020 blessings to you all.



CAPT Rodger Welch, USN(Ret)
Executive Director
Tailhook Educational Foundation



From left: NAS Pensacola Commanding Officer (CO) CAPT Tim Kinsella, USN, RADM Don Quinn, USN(Ret), Hans and Kathy Schmoldt, Naval Aviation Schools Command CO CAPT Vinnie Segars, USN and CAPT Sterling Gilliam, USN(Ret), 25 Feb '20. The Schmoldts presented a scholarship in memory of the fallen Sailors from last December's shooting at NAS Pensacola.

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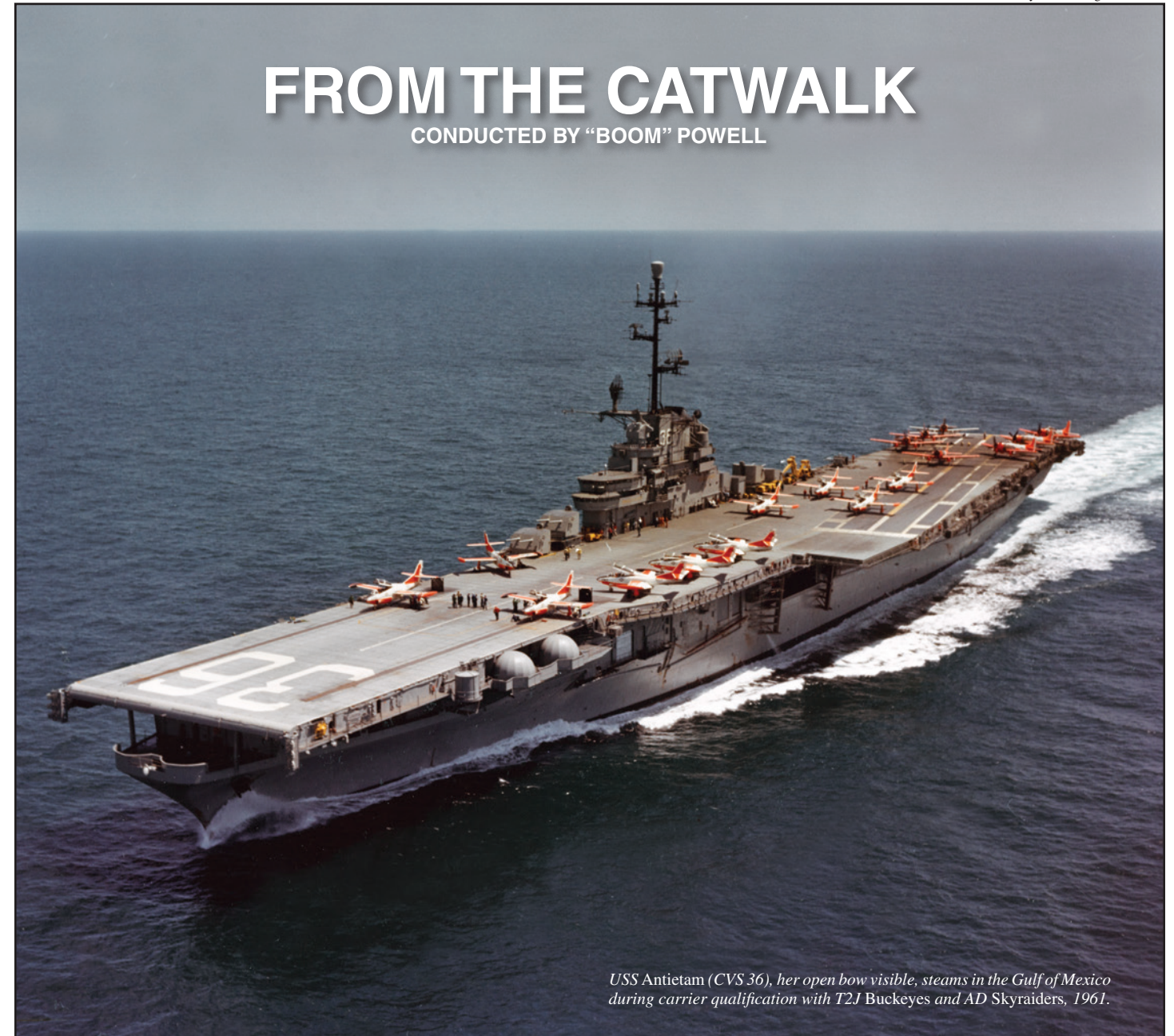
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USS Antietam (CVS 36), her open bow visible, steams in the Gulf of Mexico during carrier qualification with T2J Buckeyes and AD Skyraiders, 1961.

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FROM THE CATWALK

CONDUCTED BY "BOOM" POWELL

Question: Which famous pioneer Naval Aviators began their careers in submarines?

ANTIETAM

After four arrested landings, my trusty T2J *Buckeye* sustained a No. 3 wire (of course) cut on one of the main mount tires, which needed to be changed. The carrier was heading back into Pensacola at the end of the day, and I needed two more landings the next day. So, I was disappointed but also elated that the four landings had gone well. They took my aircraft down to the hangar bay, and I went forward onto the open bow that some of the *Essex*-class carriers had in those days. I stood by myself enjoying the fresh air and the quiet of the ship steaming back into port. My mistake was that with the wind noise I failed to hear the sound of a deck launch of an AD *Skyraider*. As it got airborne, it settled what felt like mere inches right over me. Now 78 years old, I don't believe I will die of a heart attack. If I didn't go that day, I won't anytime in the future. The prop wash blew me backward 15 feet into the hangar bay. I do believe that my tumbling across the deck provided substantial entertainment for several plane captains working in that section. I suspect the Sailors knew well why it wasn't a great idea to be out on the bow until the announcement of "no more flight ops" was made over the IMC, which came about one minute after I picked myself up off the deck!

—CAPT Thomas A. Myers, USN(Ret)

I'M SPECIAL

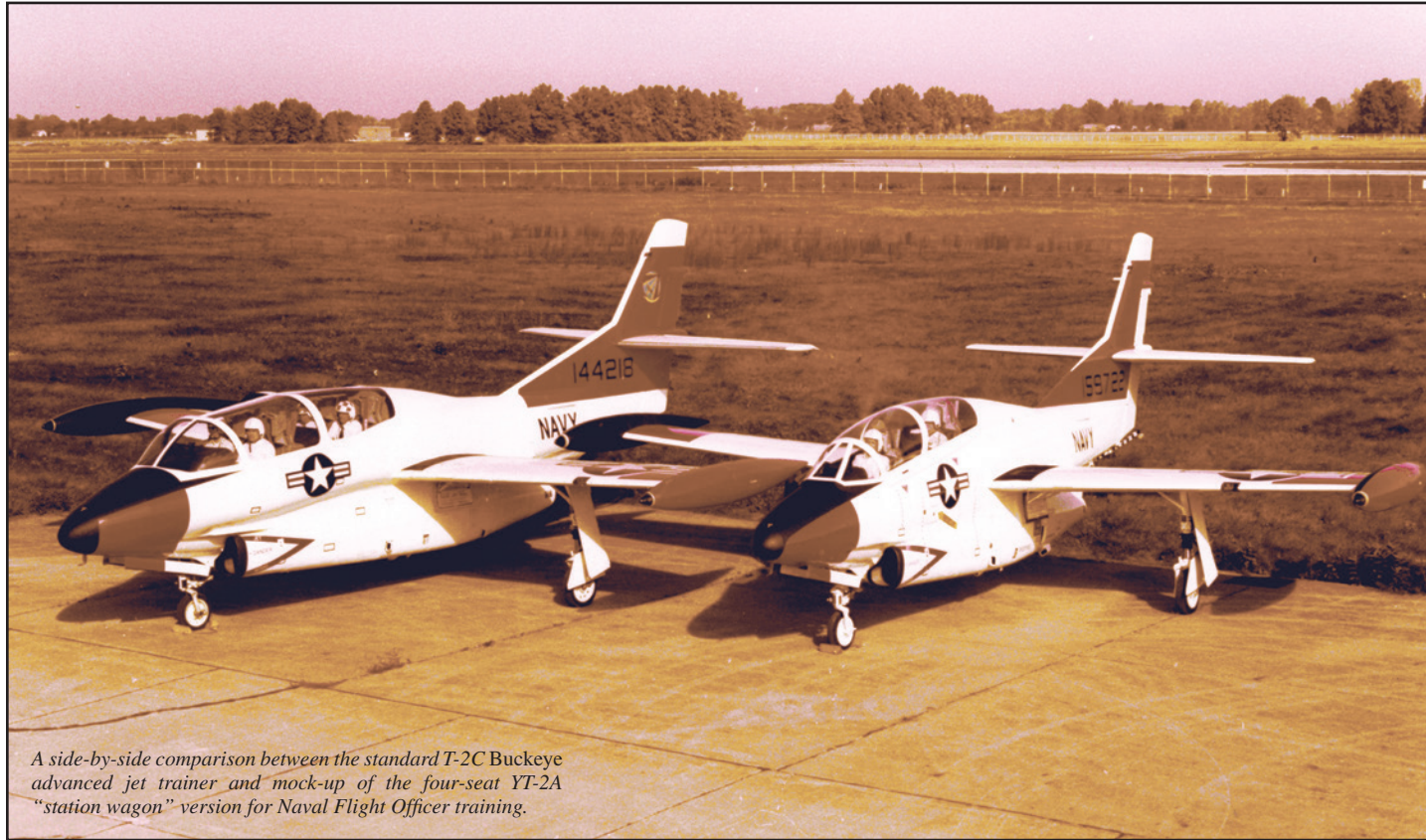
A commanding officer wrote an open letter to the men and women of his Strike Fighter Squadron, which was about to deploy:

1. In case you have forgotten, or if your recruiter failed to mention it, the Navy is a seagoing outfit.
2. We NEED you. If we have to deploy without you, whatever job you are supposed to perform or watch you're supposed to stand will be added to the load everyone else is going to carry. Can we manage without you? Certainly. The majority of us are hard chargers, and we will rise to the task of taking up your slack and handling your shirked responsibilities. But as we do so, you will be in our thoughts. If you are comfortable with this, by all means run a chit requesting we send you on temporary duty to a naval air station or the staff for the duration of the deployment. In the "Reason" block, just put "cause I'm special."

CORRECT PROCEDURE

A Marine aviation cadet used the relief tube while flying an air combat maneuvering hop in an F-9 *Cougar* out of NAS Beeville, Texas. He thought he had done it correctly until he went inverted with negative g and a stream of yellow liquid came out of the bottom of the cockpit and ended up frozen on the canopy. One can surmise what happened when the temperature increased as he returned to base.





A side-by-side comparison between the standard T-2C Buckeye advanced jet trainer and mock-up of the four-seat YT-2A "station wagon" version for Naval Flight Officer training.

STATION WAGON T-2

Little is known about BuNo 144218 after it served as a mock-up for a four-seat *Buckeye*. Originally an XT2J-1 and later redesignated YT-2A, it was probably held at the North American Aviation factory in Columbus, Ohio. The comparison aircraft is a standard T-2C. Note the mock-up's "crew" wearing dress shirts, some with neckties, for the publicity photos. Proposed for Naval Flight Officer training (a VT-86 insignia appears on the tail), the concept did not sell, as civilian contractor pilots flying T-39 *Sabreliners* and T-47 *Citations* performed that function ... and provided work for many retired Naval Aviators.

EAVESDROPPING

The T-2 photo above prompted Electronic Attack Squadron veteran Herb Arnold to write, "And of course, manipulating the multitude of radio and ICS [intercockpit communications system] switch positions was a critical skill (i.e., if you were electronic countermeasures officer (ECMO) 2 and wanted only to listen on radio No. 1, listen and talk on radio No. 2, while listening to all crew positions but only talking on the ICS to ECMO 3 since you were telling jokes at the expense of the pilot and ECMO 1). As it was, that crucial expertise all had to be acquired in the fleet, often in real-world combat conditions. [We] probably need to develop a multimillion dollar computer-based simulator to train those kind of skills today."

STACKING THE DECK

During World War I Herbert Yardley established the "Black Chamber," working out of a New York City apartment breaking the diplomatic codes of many countries. During the 1922 Washington Naval Conference, couriers traveled daily from New York to Washington hand carrying the latest decoded secrets.

An intercepted transmission revealed Japan's fallback position on relative tonnages of capital ships. With this knowledge U.S. Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes only had to hold out to receive favorable terms. The result was a ratio of 5:5:3 for U.S., British and Japanese battleships. Another provision established tonnage limits of 135,000:135,000:81,000 for the new development of aircraft carriers. An individual ship limit was set at 27,000 tons, but an exception allowed the U.S. and Japan to convert a pair of capital ships already under construction to aircraft carriers. Under this provision Japan commissioned IJNS *Akagi* and *Kaga*, while USS *Lexington* (CV 2) and *Saratoga* (CV 3) entered U.S. Navy service.

An inveterate poker player, Yardley must have been pleased to stack the deck.

The agreement held for 14 years until Japan ended participation in 1936. By the time of Pearl Harbor, the Japanese had nine fleet carriers to the United States' seven.

AIRLINER OFF THE CAT

When it came time for Pat to muster out and go to work for United Airlines, he was assigned the task of delivering an F-8 *Crusader* from Yankee Station to NAS Cubi Point to begin the first leg of his trip back to CONUS. I wanted to do something to honor my friend Pat, so I got together with the paint crew and created a paper replica of the United Airlines tail logo complete with red and blue slash along with the word "United." It was large enough to cover the entire vertical stabilizer on both

Naval History and Heritage Command



USS Lexington (CV 2) and Saratoga (CV 3), converted from battlecruiser construction under the terms of the Washington Naval Treaty, expanded carrier aviation's capabilities with their size and speed.

sides. Word got out to everyone on the ship, including the captain, but not our commanding officer (CO), who did not have a sense of humor. When it came time to launch Pat, they brought his F-8 up the forward elevator much to the delight of Vulture's Row. We were all taking photos and filming the event. Of course the paper ripped off and turned to confetti as the catapult fired and Pat was on his way home to civilian life. The event was a huge hit. Pat was the hero of the moment and everyone loved it ... except for our furious skipper!

—Dave "Bluto" Woltz

FOR OUR HELO BUDS / HOW HARD CAN THIS BE?

In February 1945, Eric "Winkle" Brown (Royal Navy test pilot and master bagger who eventually accumulated 2,407 traps) learned that the Aerodynamics Flight had been allocated three Sikorsky R-4B *Hoverfly/Gadfly* helicopters. He had never seen one of these tail rotor machines, so on a trip to Farnborough, Brown took a short flight in one as a passenger.

On arrival at RAF Speke to collect two new R-4Bs, he found American mechanics assembling the machines. Brown asked the MSgt in charge about learning to fly them. He was handed a "large orange-colored booklet" with the retort, "Whaddya mean, bud? Here are your instructions." Brown and the other test pilot examined the booklet and after several practice attempts at hovering and controlling the helo, followed by a stiff drink, they set off for Farnborough. They managed the trip safely, sort of in formation, sometimes a couple of miles apart.

SKYHAWK TRIPTYCH

1. A flight of A4D *Skyhawks* from VA-76 (LCDR Boyd, LTs Jobe and Baker and LTJG Dixon) was the finale for the many flight demonstrations over *Enterprise* (CVAN 65) during *Operation Sea Orbit* in 1964. The drop tanks were rigged with a dump valve activated by the trigger switch. The first attempt to create the desired streams of red, white and blue using water and food coloring from the galley didn't work. Finally, the ship's captain sent a message to the *Blue Angels* requesting expedited delivery of the fuel soluble dyes they used. The tanks were frequently overfilled and red and blue jet fuel would spill over the flight deck with the team becoming known as the "Kool-Aid Kids."

—Ronald Baker



Army Air Forces R-4 helicopters in flight at Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn, N.Y., 1944-'45.

Tailhook collection



The shipboard Marine detachment undergoes inspection next to S-2E Trackers spotted on the flight deck of USS Wasp (CVS 18) during a break in flight operations in 1966.

Tailhook collection

USS Enterprise's (CVAN 65) unconventional island overlooks a VA-76 Spirits A4D-2N Skyhawk during flight operations in 1962.





2. I was in a Reserve anti-submarine fighter squadron with A-4L Skyhawks. We did a two-week carrier qualification work up on board USS *Wasp* (CVS 18) in the early 1970s. One day I found an ordnanceman who told me he had many AIM-9s that had been aboard for years. *Wasp* operated S2F Trackers, so the *Sidewinders* had not been touched. Since we were wired for them, I had our ordies check out the systems on the airplanes, and we came up with four good "shooters." We informed the captain that we would demonstrate a *Sidewinder* shoot off the bow, and he had as many crewmen as possible assembled on deck. We launched three shooters and a flare ship. As we rounded the corner at 300 feet in a diamond, I picked up the flares about a mile and a half away and one mile in front of *Wasp*. As the flares dropped through 1,500 feet, all three of us had a good tone. We went line abreast and fired. The first missile hit the top flare as it was at about 1,000 feet. The next one took out the rest of it, and the last *Sidewinder* hit the second flare just a few feet above the water. Needless to say, it was a spectacular sight for those watching from the deck. Later on, I discovered that the AIM-9B was very erratic in its flight path. I'm glad that our missiles that day did not violate *Wasp's* space. That would have been even more spectacular.

— Pat McGirl

3. A perfect description of my much-loved Skyhawk:
 "Bang in the middle of this black-topped desert a traffic light blinked like something in a Salvador Dali painting. You stopped on red to let a line of Skyhawks curtsy past, their jets creating a shimmering haze so that you felt the whole thing was a mirage. Sometimes there were bombs hanging from the Skyhawks. They carried their long thin noses very high and moved on long haughty legs. They had the arrogance of high-fashion models, elegant and untouchable despite their bursting bellies, swaying down the strip. Then the traffic light turned green, and you crossed very cautiously indeed the runway you would otherwise never have seen."

—William Stevenson, Zanek! A Chronicle of the Israeli Air Force

Above: A VAH-11 A-3B Skywarrior refuels a VA-172 A-4C Skyhawk while another Scooter awaits its turn in the basket during the 1960s.

Tailhook collection



Jet blast blurs the view behind the Blue Angels No. 5 A-4 Skyhawk as it taxis during an air show on board NAS Miramar, Calif., Oct 1975.

BOUNCES

- The thought of safety in the vastness of hundreds of miles of a horizon of nothing but the deep blue ocean seems counterintuitive. You flee from the land. And as each mile passes, you relax more even though "home" is a boat and it's filled with things that can burn, explode and sink.
 —CAPT Thomas A. Myers, USN(Ret)
- In the Wi '19 issue of *The Hook* John Lavra gave us proof of the longevity and adaptability of the *Able Dog* when he recounted accumulating more than 1,000 hours in nine models of the Douglas *Skyraider*.
- RADM "Jig Dog" Ramage said, "tanker fuel is the most expensive there is because you pay for it twice, but when you need it you really need it!"
- History is littered with wars, which everybody knew would never happen.
 —Enoch Powell

BETTER THAN RAY-BANS?

One of the difficulties with early carrier landings was how to detect the LSO's signals at night. One solution was applying fluorescent strips to the LSO's suit and paddles and shining an ultraviolet light on him. The result worked, but with a blurry glow that was hard to interpret. "Because ultraviolet light affects vision when it is directed into the eyes, [the] Bureau of Aeronautics has procured the M-1944 aviation goggle with special ultraviolet absorbing and nonfluorescing lenses for use by LSOs. Aviation sunglasses with special Kalichrome lenses for this purpose also are being considered for procurement."
 —Naval Aviation News, 1944

Answer: Theodore G. Ellyson and Kenneth Whiting. Before becoming Naval Aviator No. 1, Ellyson served at sea on board many battleships before receiving his first commands, USS *Tarantula* (Submarine No. 12) and USS *Seal* (Submarine No. 19).

A Naval Academy classmate of Ellyson in the Class of 1905, Whiting volunteered for submarine duty in 1908. Assigned to command USS *Shark* (Submarine No. 8) in the Philippine Islands, he oversaw her fitting out before assuming command of USS *Porpoise* (Submarine No. 7).

While CO, he came up with the idea of escaping from a submerged sub via a torpedo tube and tried it out himself. He was next the first CO of USS *Tarpon* (Submarine No. 14) before turning his attention to soaring above the wave tops rather than moving beneath them. The last Naval Aviator personally trained by Orville Wright, he received his Wings of Gold as Naval Aviator No. 16 in May 1915.

A classmate of both Ellyson and Whiting was the most famous officer to wear the dolphins of a submariner—Chester W. Nimitz.

Chock 'em, chain 'em, and loose gear to the Catwalk.

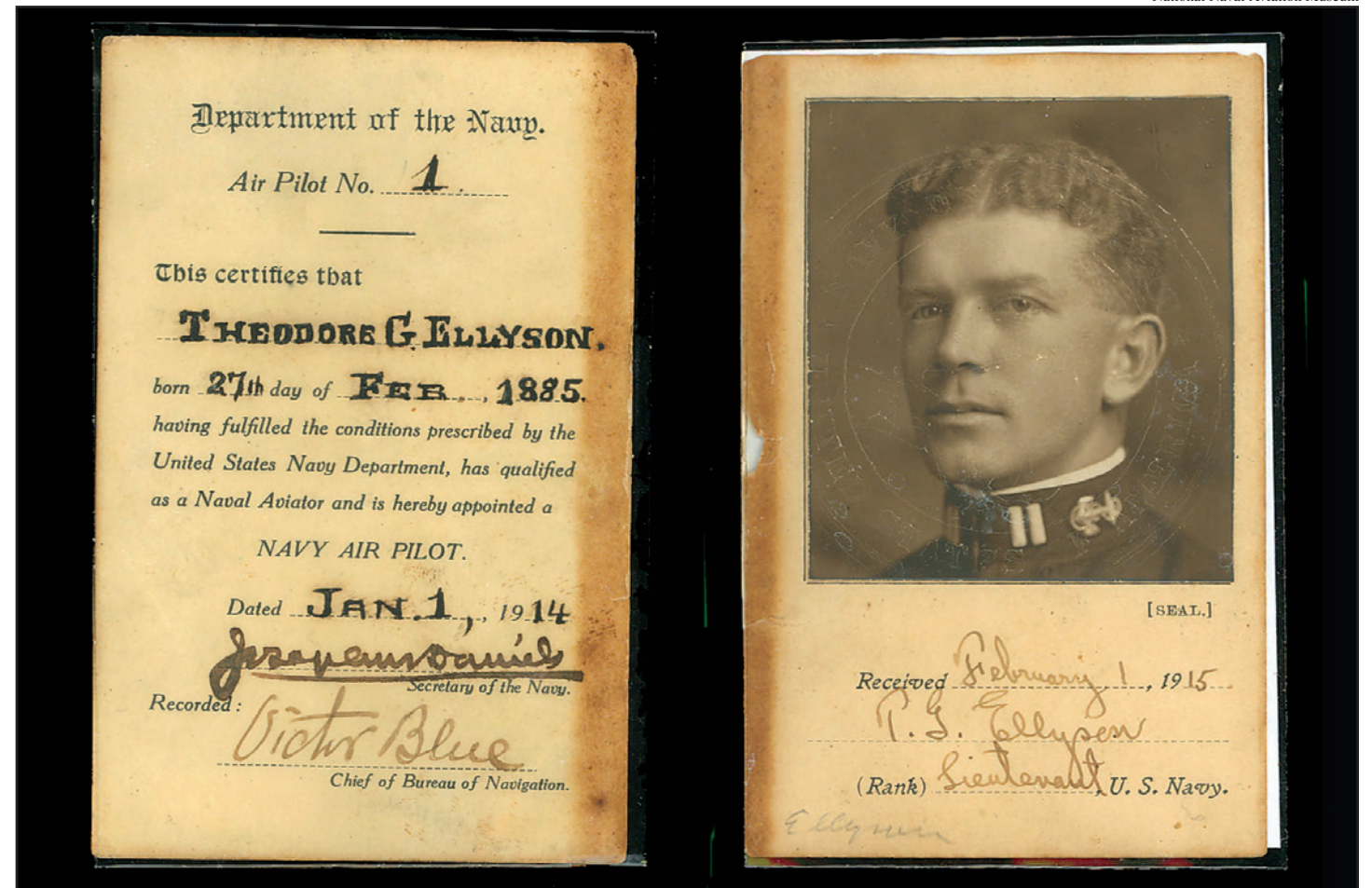
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Above: Pioneer Naval Aviator Kenneth Whiting (right) pictured in a Wright airplane while learning to fly in Dayton, Ohio, circa 1914.

Below: LT Theodore G. Ellyson, the first Navy officer to undergo flight instruction, received the designation Navy Air Pilot No. 1.

National Naval Aviation Museum





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LAUNCH

National Naval Aviation Museum

CARRIERS TO TOKYO

by Barrett Tillman



With underwing 5-in. high velocity aircraft rockets and their battery of .50-cal. machine guns, F6F Hellcats dueling Japanese fighters in the air and struck targets on the ground during the Tokyo strikes.

Two International Thrillers

By Thad Dupper



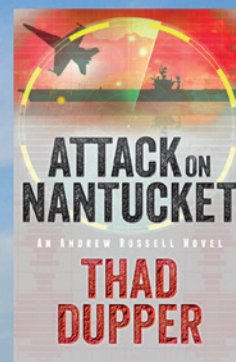
The author Thad Dupper aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln

Attack on Nantucket

The Islamic Front has embedded several terrorist cells on the island in preparation for the arrival of President Russell and his family.

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Beneath leaden gray skies, skirting squall lines and snow showers, the Hellcats and Corsairs crossed Japan's Honshu coast, cruising at high speed toward Japanese airfields. The pilots had been briefed to expect the biggest air battle of the war, a significant warning considering the scale of the largest tangles with enemy fliers the previous year. More than 300 Japanese aircraft had been shot down on 19 June 1944, off the Marianas and well over 200 fell on 24 October at Leyte Gulf.

Anticipating large, confusing swarms of friendly and hostile aircraft, the Americans had painted yellow bands on the noses of their carrier planes for quick identification. Aircrews were only informed of operation plans in four-hour increments, limiting the information they could impart if captured.

As the first fighter sweep crossed the coast with master armament switches on and gunsight rheostats turned up, the F6F and F4U pilots scanned the cloudy skies, searching for dark green planes bearing rust red hinomaru suns. The flattop aviators expected to shoot their way into Tokyo.

The presence of American carrier planes in Japanese airspace on Friday morning, 16 February 1945, signified far more than met the eye. The U.S. Navy's debut over the home islands provided strategic cover for one of the most important amphibious operations of the war, the impending Iwo Jima invasion.

Steaming just 60 miles off Honshu, the greatest assemblage of naval power on the planet stood by to launch follow-up strikes. Tokyo was about to confront the challenge of American carrier aviation.

Tokyo Prelude

As Task Force 58 had pounded north through roughening seas, ADM Raymond Spruance's Fifth Fleet took advantage of poor weather to shield its approach from the Japanese. During the 12-hour run-up to the launch

point, carrier aircrews sorted out their equipment. Many donned long underwear against the North Pacific weather. Half of the air groups were new to combat, and Task Force 58 commander VADM Marc Mitscher took pains to prepare them as well as



Naval History and Heritage Command



Task Force 58 Commander VADM Marc Mitscher confers with Chief of Staff Commodore Arleigh Burke on board USS Bunker Hill (CV 17), Feb 1945.

possible. His staff issued notes on tactics and operational procedures, including the latest information on Japanese defenses.

Though of mixed quality, intelligence had come a long way since the Doolittle Raid in April 1942. One pilot recalled, "the maps were good for geographics and strategic target aids, but most recent tactical info was sparse and not very accurate."

Some old Pacific hands had waited a long time for a look at Tokyo. They included LCDR Fritz E. Wolf, flying off USS *Yorktown* (CV 10). A prewar Naval Aviator, he resigned to join Maj Gen Claire Chennault's *Flying Tigers* and returned home credited with downing four Japanese planes. Unlike most of the naval personnel in the *Tigers*, he returned to his parent service and wrangled another combat assignment. He assumed command of VBF-3 a week before his 29th birthday.

CDR Charles Crommelin, skipper of Air Group 12 on board USS *Randolph* (CV 15) had been chasing "meatballs" since 1943. The Pacific War was a family affair for him. His four brothers not only served in the Navy, but also graduated from Annapolis between 1923 and 1941, a record for sibling ties at the Naval Academy.

A few pilots had seen the other half of the global war, like VF-4's LT Dean "Diz" Laird on board USS *Essex* (CV 9). Flying an F4F *Wildcat* off *Ranger* (CV 4), the lanky Californian downed two German planes over Norway in October 1943. LT Donald A. Pattie, commanding USS *San Jacinto*'s (CVL 30) torpedo bombers, had been the first American to land in Vichy-occupied Morocco in November 1942.

On the evening of 15 February ordnancemen on at least one carrier prepared to load napalm bombs for use against the Imperial Palace and surrounding area but plans were aborted at the last minute. Later the squadrons were told that the palace had no military significance. A few aviators grumbled at what they considered a missed opportunity.

Veteran or rookie, all pilots manned aircraft around 0600 the next morning, groping in the flight decks' predawn blackout to find their

National Archives



With tense expressions on their faces and the important target for the day displayed prominently on the ready room bulkhead, aviators receive final instructions before manning their planes, 16 Feb '45.



CDR Charles Crommelin flew some of the first F6F Hellcat combat missions in 1943 and received the Navy Cross for actions over Tokyo.

designated aircraft. They were appalled at the weather, which a pilot manning a plane on board *Hornet* (CV 12) called "dark and icky." On occasion the low-lying scud obscured the carriers' radio masts.

On rain swept decks, launch officers judged each carrier's motion in the spume-capped waves. As the bow began to rise, a checkered flag dropped abruptly and the first pilot off each ship released his brakes, kept a stiffened arm against the throttle and began his takeoff roll.

Gloss-blue *Hellcats* and *Corsairs* lifted off at 15-second intervals, rising into the chilling gloom with running lights shining from wingtips and tails, providing essential reference for pilots joining their two-plane sections and four-plane divisions.

Thus began almost 11 hours of continuous flight operations.

Surprise was important to the American plans. The initial goal was air superiority—beating down Japan's air power, which was best accomplished by destroying enemy aircraft on the ground. Once the tailhookers gained control of enemy airspace, they would devote more attention to the type of pinpoint targets that B-29 *Superfortresses* seldom hit in high-altitude attacks, namely specific aircraft and engine factories.

Therein lay the striking contrast between the Army Air Forces and Navy. With its high speed and powerful defensive armament, the *Superfortress* was capable of operating unescorted in hostile airspace, usually shrugging off enemy fighters while delivering massive bomb loads. Carrier-based aircraft were far more vulnerable. In order to bomb any target effectively, they had to descend into the teeth of the defenses, releasing their ordnance below 3,000 feet where the flak was thickest and most accurate. Nor could *Avengers* or *Helldivers* outrun most Japanese fighters. Therefore carrier bombers relied upon close escort of *Hellcats* and *Corsairs* to run interference for them. It was an unavoidable trade-off, the range and power of land-based bombers versus the mobility and relative precision of carrier aircraft.

First Blood

First blood was spilled at the southernmost tip of the Chiba Peninsula, 20 miles south of Yokohama. Five *Essex* *Hellcats* spotted a cigar-shaped G4M *Betty* and pounced. (Ed Note: This article uses the Allied code names for Japanese aircraft.) A Louisianan, LTJG E.J. "Nic" Nicolini, won the race. He shot down the twin-engine bomber at 0800, beginning nine hours of almost uninterrupted combat.

LCDR Herbert N. Houck, leading 20 of his own USS *Lexington* (CV 16) *Hellcats* with 20 more from *Hancock* (CV 19) and *San Jacinto*, was a seasoned commander, having led VF-9 since December 1943. Moreover, it was one day short of a year since his last combat over Truk Atoll in February 1944. In worsening weather, his pilots shifted targets, opting for Katori Airfield near the coast. Minutes later Houck's formation entered an intense air battle lasting a half hour.

The dogfight spread as if by cyclonic action, drawing outriders into its vortex as more A6M *Zekes* arrived on the scene. Targets were plentiful. LTJG Henry K. Champion fired at seven bandits in succession, claiming a kill and two probables. LCDR W.J. "Pete" Keith, leading *Hancock*'s VF-80, became an ace in a day, claiming five victims. So did one of his division leaders, LT William C. Edwards, who had flown dive bombers in 1942. Unusually old for a combat pilot, "Bulldog" Edwards was a week short of his 31st birthday.

By the time the cloudy sky cleared of aircraft over Katori, the Americans had claimed 48 Japanese planes destroyed. Though the claims were exaggerated, the outcome was American control of Japanese airspace. But it would be a tough education. USS *Bunker Hill*'s (CV 17) inexperienced Air Group 84 launched its initial combat sorties just 21 days since departing NAS Alameda, Calif. At some targets the flak was described as "pedestrian" because, in the words of one squadron commander, "you could get out and walk on it."

From the best-known dogfight of the day emerged the legend of Japanese pilot Kaneyoshi Muto. With eight years of experience, the diminutive warrant officer was described by no less an authority than leading ace Saburo Sakai as "a genius in the air." Yet on the ground he was "a friendly and cheerful ace who was liked by everybody."

Breaking into combat in China in 1937, Muto returned to become a tactics instructor. From 1941 he increased his victory log in the Philippines and Java, later leaving his mark in the Solomon Islands and New Guinea. He survived Iwo Jima's Darwinian summer of 1944, cementing his reputation as "the toughest fighter pilot in the Imperial Navy." Now he flew with the Yokosuka Air Group at Atsugi.



Task Force 58 launched strikes against Japan in inclement weather and heavy seas, both apparent as gun crews bundle against the cold on board USS *Yorktown* (CV 10).

Tailhook collection



VT-20 personnel recount their missions over Japan in the ready room on board USS *Lexington* (CV 16), Feb 1945.

On 16 February the 28-year-old Muto was awaiting news of the birth of his child when word came of enemy aircraft inbound. The noontime scramble pitted seven USS *Bennington* (CV 20) *Hellcats* against 10 or more *Zekes*, J2M *Jacks* and N1K2-J *Georges* fighters led by Lieutenant Yuzo Tskumoto. Muto revved his *George* into the air to intercept the *Hellcats*.

The Americans were well trained but inexperienced, entering their first combat against some of the elite of the Imperial Japanese Navy. It was a shattering initiation, with two *Bennington* pilots lost and two captured. In the frantic low-level dogfight Muto used his four 20 mm cannon to good effect, claiming multiple victories. A corrupted version of the event made the press almost as soon as he landed.

Ignoring his squadronmates, reporters focused on Muto, attributing all four kills to him in a solo battle against a dozen Americans. His wife Kiyoko heard the reports shortly after delivering their daughter, thrilled to know her flier was not only safe but also famous. The press dubbed Muto “the Miyamoto Musashi of the air,” after the legendary swordsman best known as author of *The Book of Five Rings*.

Elsewhere, airborne Japanese were scarce. Wolf, the former *Flying Tiger*, took eight *Yorktown Hellcats* in low, just beneath the overcast, and pressed on to Konoike Airfield east of Osaka. Recalled one pilot, “The apron was packed with neatly parked aircraft, which went up in flames as we pumped our fifties and rockets into the sitting ducks. Only one machine gun was firing at us, so we made three passes.” After the last run the *Yorktown* pilots counted nine destroyed and 21 damaged.

The fifth fighter sweep launched from RADM Frederick C. Sherman’s Task Group 58.3. He was skipper of *Lexington* (CV 2) when she was sunk at Coral Sea nearly three years before. His pilots were assigned targets to the west, resulting in the first Navy planes over Tokyo. Better weather farther inland permitted strike leaders to hit targets in the forenoon period, notably in the capital’s northwest industrial area. The Ota aircraft plant was hit successively, following up B-29 attacks.

That afternoon *Bunker Hill’s Avengers* and *Helldivers* finished off the Nakajima aircraft factory at Ota, but Japanese Army fighters took a toll.

USN

In its first day at war, Air Group 84 lost two *Avengers* and two *Corsairs* with eight fliers.

Other units suffered even heavier losses. Since November USS *Wasp’s* (CV 18) *Hellcats* had logged half a dozen small battles over the Philippines and Formosa, but Tokyo was the big leagues. VF-81 lost five pilots in its first major operation, as much the victim of their own eagerness as the skill of Japanese pilots. The *Wasp* fliers claimed 15 kills, but it was a poor exchange. “The old lesson was learned the hard way again,” said CDR Frederick J. Brush, who noted young pilots’ tendency to break formation.

National Naval Aviation Museum



Land based for much of the Pacific war, Marine F4Us like this VMF-216 Bulldogs Corsair launching from USS *Wasp* (CV 18) operated from the fast carriers at the time of the strikes against Japan.



F4U Corsairs lead Air Group 84 warming up before launch from USS *Bunker Hill* (CV 17) for strikes against Tokyo, Feb 1945.



SB2C Helldivers wing their way toward targets in Tokyo during the first strike by carrier aircraft against the home islands, 16 Feb '45.

USN

Despite widespread combats that ranged from the clouds down to street level, some pilots found no action at all. *Hornet’s* ENS Willis Hardy spoke for disappointed fighter pilots when he said, “We, being high cover over the Yoko end of town, didn’t see any of Tokyo and not even a peek at Mount Fuji.”

On the last strike of the day, a mixed bag of Japanese Army fighters caught up with egressing Americans between the Ota engine factory and the coast, initiating a running battle. *San Jacinto’s* CDR Gordon E. Schecter led his *Hellcats* in protecting the bombers. Previously a floatplane pilot, he had learned the fighter trade well. Schecter downed four planes that morning and then, in the evening shootout, a Ki-44 *Tojo* and probably a Ki-43 *Oscar*. Turning to meet each attack, his fighter pilots claimed nine more. But some Japanese got through the U.S. escorts. Backseaters in *Helldiver* dive bombers manhandled their twin-.30 cal. mounts while *Avenger* torpedo plane gunners drew a bead in their power-operated turrets. *San Jacinto* and *Lexington* bombers claimed three kills and several damaged before reaching the coast.

First Day Score

On the biggest day of air combat since the Marianas Turkey Shoot, carrier aviators claimed 291 enemy planes shot down. Six *Hellcat* pilots gained the status of ace in a day. According to available Japanese records, it appears that the actual toll was 44 enemy aircraft. If so, the six-fold error was due to several factors, including inexperience. More than half the Americans were new to combat, and only experience could teach a pilot what a genuine kill looked like, as opposed to nonlethal damage on a “bandit.”

American losses were 52 carrier planes. Hardest hit was *Bennington’s* new Air Group 82, with a dozen aircraft missing. Meanwhile, the six embarked Marine squadrons received an especially rough initiation to combat with 11 *Corsairs* from *Bennington*, *Bunker Hill* and *Wasp* lost.

One of *Bennington’s* losses was a heartbreaking friendly fire incident. ENS Paul Spradling of VF-82 was returning to the task group, apparently with inoperable identification friend or foe equipment. He performed the day’s recognition turns, but



LT Harry Rowland with his battle-damaged F6F Hellcat on board *Yorktown*, 17 Feb '45.

panicky crewmen on board a destroyer opened fire. The 5-in. barrage tumbled the *Hellcat* into the water, killing the 22-year-old Idaho aviator, leaving a young widow.

Though Task Force 58 lost somewhat more planes in dogfights than the Japanese, the hard fact was that the U.S. Navy could afford such attrition whereas Tokyo could not, especially in trained aircrews. By establishing control of enemy airspace in one day, the carrier fliers were set to press their advantage as Mitscher's staff prepared target lists for the morrow.

Moreover the fleet was inviolate. That afternoon as the last attackers returned to their roosts, RADM Matt Gardner's USS *Enterprise* (CV 6) and *Saratoga* (CV 3) night fliers took wing. Both air groups "capped" major Japanese airfields, preventing the enemy from harassing the task force during the night.

The Second Day

Predawn launches on the 17th had the goals of establishing combat air patrols to protect the force and dispatching searchers to snoop along the coast for Japanese shipping. During the two days there were meager pickings for ship hunters, which sank only one large merchant vessel and several smaller ones.

Although deteriorating weather chilled the task force's effort, literally and figuratively, missions were flown against industrial targets. Carrier bombers sought out the engine plants at Tachikawa and Musashino.

The aviators launched at dawn, organized by divisions and squadrons, and headed inland. "We appeared to be floating above a pure white carpet stretching as far as the eye could see, ultimately blending away into a grayish haze ... The reflection of the bright sun created the illusion of being studded with ten million diamonds," said one bomber pilot. "I could not escape the feeling of being in a fairy tale world of castles and fantasy."

Leading *San Jacinto's* TBM *Avengers* was LT Pattie, the veteran of Morocco. His target was the Tachikawa engine factory in Tokyo's western suburbs, and the Japanese scenery offered a vivid contrast with his Atlantic cruises. "Looming out of the carpet directly in front of us was a massive tapered tower, solid white across its jagged top with white sides that blended into streaks of brown near the base ... The tower was, of course, the sacred mountain of the Japanese, Fujiyama. I had no time to dwell further on its beauty as we had to start the letdown toward our objective ..."

The thrill of seeing Japan's most recognizable feature was tempered by tactical concerns like monitoring engine gauges, keeping formation and especially remaining vigilant. Flying northwest over Yokohama, Pattie glanced to port and saw his leader attacked.

From high and behind, an elegantly flown fighter swiftly dived onto the air group commander's tail, rolled inverted and shot down LCDR Donald White. He bailed out, parachuting onto the parade ground of an Army pilot school and survived the next six months in captivity.

White's wingman, ENS Karl Smith, reacted quickly, nosing into a diving spiral, but the attacker pursued, firing a quick shot that raked the

Naval History and Heritage Command



USS Hancock (CV 19) and Wasp replenish at Ulithi Atoll following the Feb 1945 strikes. The ensuing operations took them to Japanese waters again in the coming months.

top of Smith's *Hellcat*. Already inverted, the Japanese merely pulled through into a split-S and briefly chased Smith. Pattie was simultaneously stunned and impressed. "It was not a show of flamboyance but a highly professional maneuver, executed with superb airmanship."

Smith headed for the coast, found another American airplane and proceeded seaward. But his shot-up engine failed over the task group's destroyer screen and he ditched and was returned to *Langley* (CVL 27).

Despite the losses, Air Group 23 continued to the target.

Upon sighting the Tachikawa factory, Pattie wagged his wings, sending his *Avengers* into combat spread. He had several potential targets in the complex but selected the main assembly building.

Slanting into their glide bombing runs, the big torpedo bombers opened their bomb bay doors. Pattie wrote, "We bore down with vengeance. To ensure an effective attack I held my release till the last moment, pulling out right at the treetops." He glanced over his shoulder, pleased that his four 500-pounders had punched through the building's roof. The squadron's other bombs also appeared to impact the factory.

Diz Laird had splashed a *Sally* bomber the day before. Now he scored a *Tony* and a *Tojo* during a strike on the Nakajima Tama engine factory, becoming the only Navy ace with kills against Germany and Japan.

In the early afternoon the marginal weather worsened. Mitscher cancelled scheduled strikes and, recovering his airborne planes, reversed course for Iwo Jima.

The recovery posed a major challenge to pilots and LSOs. In heavy seas even the big-deck carriers bucked and rolled, requiring exquisite timing from paddles, who had to judge the cut signal to the second.

Landings were especially tough on pilots who flew from *Independence*-class light carriers. Their decks were only 73 feet across, 23 less than those of the *Essex* class.

In all, tailhookers claimed 341 Japanese planes in the air and 190 on the ground. On the debit side of the ledger, Mitscher lost more than 80 planes to all causes. But high among the U.S. Navy's strengths was the fact that it could absorb such losses and continue operating. That month American factories produced more than 300 new *Corsairs* and nearly 600 *Hellcats*.

Actual Japanese air-to-air losses remain uncertain. Imperial Headquarters admitted 78 but was less specific about those bombed or strafed on their fields. In turn, Japanese fliers claimed at least 134 kills versus the 60 carrier planes actually lost to flak and fighters.

Whatever the score, something remarkable had occurred. For two days a major American fleet plied Japanese waters, established air superiority over Tokyo itself and got away clean. Only a handful of enemy aircraft even approached the force. The operation totally refuted one of the central tenets of naval air power's severest critic, Alexander Seversky, who believed that land-based aviation was superior to shipborne aviation. But Mitscher's 16 carriers lofted 2,761 sorties, more than a match for Japan's naval and army air forces.

The fast carriers would return to Empire waters again and again.



Tailhook collection



LT "Diz" Laird's kills during the Feb 1945 combat over Japan made him an ace with both Japanese and German aircraft to his credit.

Ford: Challenging the Status Quo

by CAPT John "Yank" Cummings, USN



USS Gerald Ford (CVN 78) conducts a high-speed turn during sea trials in the Atlantic, 29 Oct '19.

I write this article to provide an insider's perspective for the Tailhook community on the status of USS *Gerald R. Ford* (CVN 78) because in 2017, like many of you, I heard and read some of these rumors:

- "Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System (EMALS) doesn't work."
- "Advanced Arresting Gear (AAG) is a troubled system."
- "Dual-band radar (DBR) is always hard down."
- "*Gerald R. Ford* breaks and returns early from at-sea periods."

Upon arrival in August 2018, I found most rumors to be wrong, and since October 2019, this ship has completed five flawless underways. We have departed and returned on time, every time and DBR, AAG and EMALS performance has proved outstanding.

2019

In 2019, the ship and crew completed a 15-month post-shakedown availability at Newport News Shipbuilding (NNS). Repairs and upgrades were completed on several key systems including main reduction gears, main turbine generator, improvement to AAG water twisters and the build out of unfinished spaces. We came through sea trials in October without issue and confirmed all repairs as completed satisfactorily.

We made two more underways in late 2019. The November at-sea period was record breaking. *Ford* was underway for 21 straight days, the longest to date, and steamed 7,000 miles. This doubled the previous high and included sailing through two days of the heaviest weather the ship had ever experienced. We showed that *Ford* can successfully do "ship things" well. This year will be about doing "aircraft carrier things."



Ford Commanding Officer CAPT John J. "Yank" Cummings presents a Wolverine of the Day award to LS3 Mitchell Farrell, 28 Jan '20.



A VX-23 EA-18G Growler aft of Ford's island, 28 Jan '20.

Aircraft Compatibility Tests: Phase II

During aircraft compatibility testing (ACT) I in 2017, Ford collected launch and recovery test points for the Super Hornet between 36,000 and 44,000 pounds only. As of 30 January 2020, because of the hard work from ship's force, VX-20, VX-23, Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) and General Atomics, Ford can launch and recover all fleet aircraft (FA-18E/F Super Hornet, EA-18G Growler, E-2D Advanced Hawkeye and C-2A Greyhound) at deployment weights, in both various wing external tank/pod configurations and wind conditions. We also validated the Aircraft Recovery Bulletins and Aircraft Launch Bulletins (ALB) for the T-45C Goshawk 18 months ahead of schedule, thanks to the hard chargers at Aircraft Launch and Recovery Equipment Program Office (PMA-251).

ACT II had three distinct test regimes. First, Air Test and Evaluation Squadron (VX) pilots completed approaches to assess the aerodynamic effect from the burble created by Ford's smaller island, which is located further aft. Second, the test team collected data from the aircraft and AAG for low weight/high wind-over-deck (low energy), heavy weight/low wind-over-deck (high energy) arrestments and several test points between those extremes. Third, high and low-energy catapult shots were completed to collect data on the launch bar and aircraft stress. I watched a jaw-dropping 5.5 g, 180.6-kt. end speed EMALS launch and have never observed an aircraft travel that fast on a catapult. ACT II ended on 30 January with a successful "shared energy" launch that shot three heavyweight aircraft (two EA-18Gs and one FA-18F) in full blower all in under a minute.

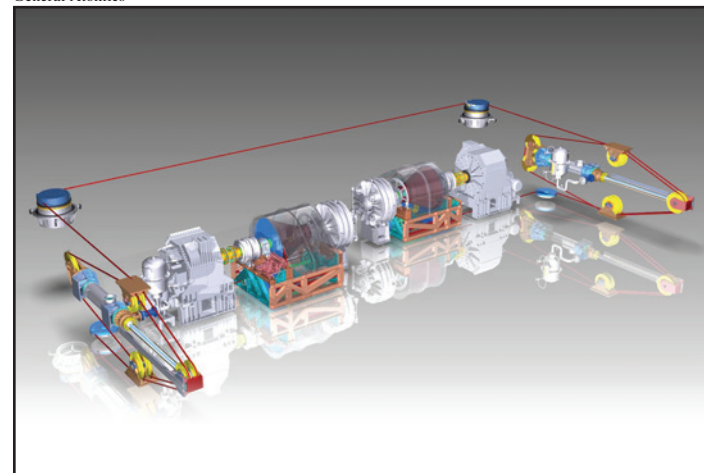
Overall the EMALS and AAG systems performed well throughout the 16-day, 211 trap event with only a few minor glitches. We pulled in with three up wires (Ford only has three) and four up cats with the ship's cumulative trap count at 958. AAG and EMALS had not been used in more than two years and to have such a strong underway just out of the yard is a great sign for the future of these systems.

I am sure there will be an overly technical test pilot paper on ACT II results that no self-respecting fleet Naval Aviator will understand, but I can share some hasty feedback from the VX testers. There was no appreciable difference between a Nimitz and Ford approach, arrestment or cat shot —except for that wicked 180.6-kt. back-breaker shot!

Flight Deck Certification (FDC)

FDC has been scheduled for mid-March with Carrier Air Wing Eight (CVW-8). It will include Day Zero precision-approach and landing system certification flights followed by Day One with 50 day traps, then Day Two with 70 day and 40 night traps. This will meet requirements to obtain our FDC and Carrier Air Traffic Control certification. We will conduct fleet operations with CVW-8 to include Air Combat Training Continuum events and cyclic operations, followed by VFA-106 and VAW-120 Fleet Replacement Squadron (FRS) carrier qualifications (CQ). This will be the first time in Ford's history that we will give back to the fleet. That trend will continue with every subsequent underway as we conduct some form of fleet, FRS or Naval Air Training Command CQ. Ford will be the only CQ asset regularly available on the East Coast this year.

General Atomics



Ford's advanced arresting gear is simpler than the Mk 7 used on Nimitz-class ships. It is designed for a broader range of aircraft, including UAVs, while reducing manpower and maintenance.

2020-'21

Post-delivery test and trials (PDT and T) runs from the end of sea trials (October 2019) until we commence full ship shock trials (FSST) in June 2021. The goal of PDT and T is to identify any remaining bugs while we develop and refine operating procedures best completed with an embarked air wing. We have nine at-sea periods lasting three to four weeks during the next 14 months, and CVW-8 is our assigned air wing as we continue to make this ship better. Ship's company will use this time to confirm necessary parts lists to determine what is going to break now so we can refine our spares posture for work ups and deployment.

My personal goal, and note that this is not a requirement, is to put more than 7,000 catapult launches and traps on the system in addition to the ship-oriented events/certifications/trials that we must complete.

We are planning to do some short cyclic operational "sprints" during a few events to determine how quickly we can turn around aircraft and get them airborne.

The Magic of Mighty Warship Gerald R. Ford Flight Deck and Hangar Bay

The flight deck is the most unique and visually apparent feature of the ship. The island superstructure is about 30 percent smaller and positioned 140 feet aft and more outboard than the Nimitz-class island. This creates more useable space between the island and bow cats. Ford designers envisioned "pit row" style operations for this area with optimally placed in-deck fueling stations and advanced weapons elevators (AWE) to improve aircraft turn-around times.

The flight deck is approximately one-half acre bigger with a larger bow and wider corral area between aircraft elevators (ACE) 1 and 2. More space on the bow provides greater wingtip clearance when taxiing jets on the 1 or 4 row, reducing the risk of crunches. A wider corral creates room to park two additional jets and gives yellowshirts the ability to taxi jets along the deck edge behind the fighter line and spot them without the assistance of a tow tractor pushback.



USN, MC3 Connor Loessin



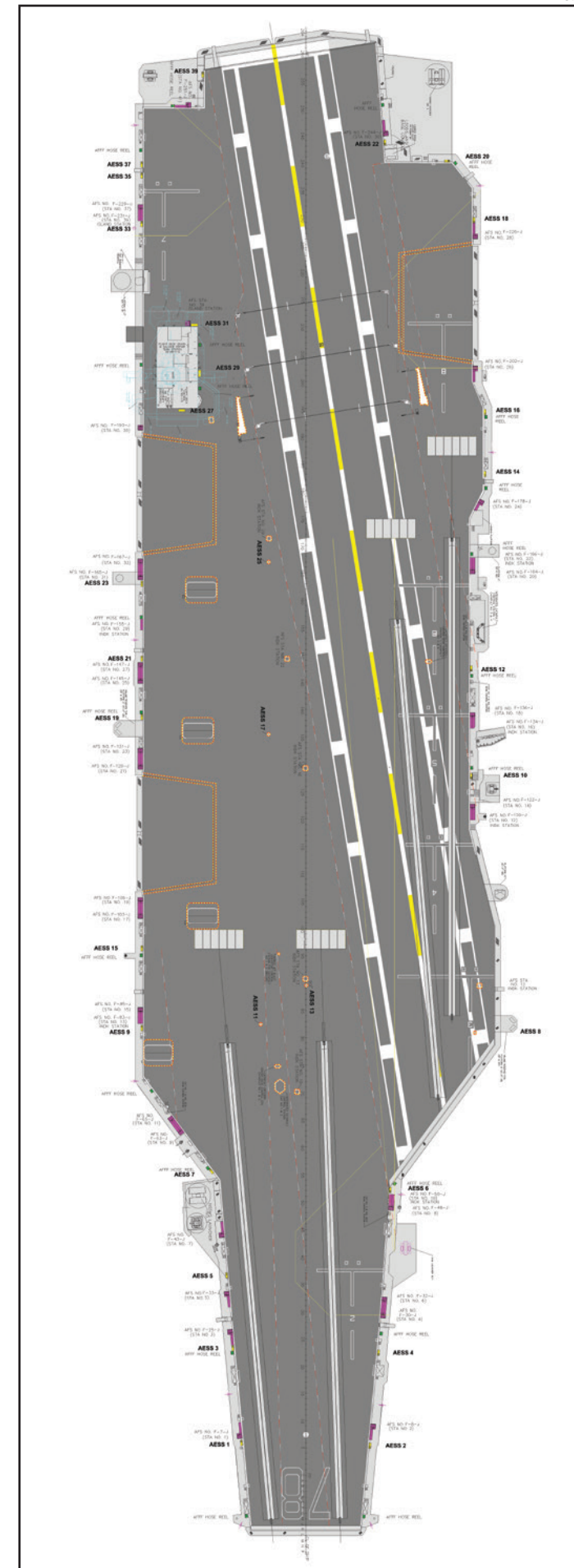
Aircraft compatibility trials conducted in January off the East Coast put current carrier planes through their paces, including this VX-20 C-2A Greyhound.

USN, MC3 Ryan Carter



Above: A heavily laden VX-23 Salty Dogs F/A-18F Super Hornet recovers on board Ford, 17 Jan '20. Unlike on board Nimitz-class carriers, the arresting wires are directly adjacent to the island.

Right: A graphic shows the significantly larger aircraft operating area provided by Ford's flight-deck configuration.



Aircraft parking locations are also modified. The “Hummer Hole” is gone so E-2Ds will either park aft of the island or at the bottom of catapult 2. Helos are also getting a new home across the landing area forward of the LSO platform over on the “glove” (formerly called the “finger”). *Ford* has three ACEs so the “porch” aft of the island is permanent because there is no ACE behind the island.

Ford also has double the flight-deck fueling stations, which include three in-deck along the fighter line and three forward for helos. One Sailor can operate these stations, which are in close proximity to fuel receptacles. This eliminates running 100 feet of hose from deck-edge fueling stations that interrupts parking aircraft spotting flow. These changes and the larger flight deck reduces the number of post-recovery towed respots, increases the effective time to maintain, refuel and reload aircraft and minimizes the turn-around time between launches. *Ford* is designed to push a lot of CVW metal into the air quickly.

Our hangar space has increased about five percent with two hangar bays and one divisional door to separate them and no “supply mountain.” Yes, the mountain is gone due to *Ford*'s six sizable hangar bay stores elevators that replace the two conveyors and the “hole” on board *Nimitz*.

EMALS

Energy for EMALS is stored in motor-generators powered from the ship's electrical bus. When EMALS fires, energy in the kinetic movement of the motor-generator rotors is rapidly extracted as high-current pulsed electricity is then power-conditioned and routed to a series of linear induction motors on both sides of the track. These switch on and off to create a magnetic pulse that travels down the catapult. The pulse is converted to kinetic energy via a 20-ft. aluminum sheet called the armature that rides in the cat trough between the linear induction motor blocks. As the armature moves forward, the system tracks its position and

USN, MCSN Jesus O. Aguiar

acceleration, constantly adjusting to ensure the commanded end speed is attained. A shuttle/spreader is attached to the top of the armature, and this device looks exactly like the one on steam catapults.

At end of the stroke, the linear induction motor reverses polarity, and the shuttle stops in about six inches. There is no water brake, which means no ship-shaking indication that the cat has fired. I am still getting used to that. There is also no need to conduct elongation no-load shots, which are those annoying shots that shooters do in the wee hour to wake up the air wing.

From an aviator's perspective, there is no procedural difference between the steam cat and EMALS. As an electronically controlled system, there's no such thing as an EMALS hangfire, and suspends are

USN, MCSN Jesus O. Aguiar



Air department Sailors refuel a HSC-9 Tridents MH-60S Seahawk on board Ford, 18 Jan '20. The flight-deck fuel stations are better situated for rapid aircraft turn-arounds.



Personnel observe the launch of a VX-23 T-45C Goshawk using Ford's revolutionary electromagnetic aircraft launch system (EMALS), 18 Jan '20.



A VX-23 Growler launches utilizing the EMALS, 27 Jan '20. The cloud of steam so familiar in images of carrier cat shots for decades is absent from CVN 78.

USN, MC3 Ryan Carter

safer because the system automatically electrically safes itself when suspended. One of the major improvements is how shooters calculate and input launch information into EMALS. Steam requires two independent, manual ALB lookups to determine the capacity selector valve (CSV) setting for the aircraft type, wind-over-deck (WOD) and weight. This setting controls the rate at which the hydraulically operated CSV opens the main steam launch valve to achieve the launch end speed. With EMALS, the shooter enters the aircraft type and weight; the system automatically pulls the required end speed from the bulletin and presents it to the shooter, who then verifies the speed and selects “CONFIRM.” The system is extremely user-friendly.

Every *Ford* cat shot has achieved an end speed within .5 knots of that calculated. The 180.6-kt. shot referenced earlier would have downed a *Nimitz* cat for over speed and required a time-consuming inspection. EMALS had no issues with such a powerful launch.

The way the system is designed, covey launches are not possible because the electrical system diverts *all* available power to the operating catapult to make sure the end speed is achieved. The energy storage system also needs time to recharge after the shot. If there is a catastrophic electrical failure during the stroke, EMALS will do whatever it takes to get the aircraft airborne.

Every underway, we continue to identify and address nuisance faults that can slow down the efficiency of launches. The good news is we saw a decrease in these faults between ACT I and ACT II, so the efforts of the NAVAIR/General Atomics team has the system trending positively.

The goodness of this system is it can shoot heavy aircraft or super light aircraft and will be able to launch aircraft yet to be designed. In fact, during new construction testing, EMALS launched an 81,000-lb. sled at 141 knots. There is the added benefit of a potential reduction in fatigue life expended on aircraft given the smoother launch from the computer-controlled acceleration.

AAG

Just as with EMALS, there is no difference for the above deck recovery procedures with the AAG. Below decks, there are substantial changes. Each engine room includes two cable shock absorbers (CSA), two giant electric motor-generators, two large hydraulic brakes about the size of a B-52 bomber's main mount brakes, two tapered purchase cable drums (PCD) and two water twisters. The above deck gear remains the same.

When the tailhook engages the cross deck pendant (CDP), the CSA absorbs the resulting kink wave. For the next 0.5 seconds, the motor-generator accelerates the rotating machinery below decks to reduce cable and airframe stress. The PCD



Sailors assigned to the air department's crash and salvage team observe flight operations on Ford's flight deck, 18 Jan '20.

USN, MC3 Zachary Melvin



A VX-23 Growler photographed moments before recovering on board CVN 78, 24 Jan '20.

USN, MC2 Ruben Reed

holds the wire and unwinds it during roll-out like a fishing reel spool. The water twister is a variable resistance, velocity sensitive, turbine-type rotary hydraulic energy absorption brake that consumes 80 percent of the arrestment and turns it into heat — think of it like the E-28 emergency recovery gear on the side of a runway, just super-ruggedized and with a brain. The brake engages as the aircraft slows to a stop, and after tailhook disengagement, the motor-generator retracts the wire. The brake also holds the CDP in tension for the next trap and can provide emergency stopping power in the case of a catastrophic water twister failure.

Just like EMALS, this system requires less manning and reduced maintenance. During flight operations, the three engine rooms are locked and unmanned, and two Sailors at a single computer console in an adjacent space monitor the operation of the system. Topside, the arresting gear officer who on board *Nimitz* stands just aft of the porch is in *Ford's* island where the Pilot Landing Aid Television camera used to be. Permission to cross the landing area comes from the Deck Safety Chief, standing just aft of the one-wire retractable sheave on the starboard side.

DBR

This is a phased-array system with six planar arrays affixed to the island with a multifunction SPY-3 radar (same as on board DDG 1000) in the upper stack and an SPY-4 volume search radar in the lower (this is the only SPY-4 radar in the U.S. Navy). DBR replaces five rotating antennas, including the carrier air traffic control center radar. The only rotating antennas on the island are the Furuno and the SPS-73 surface search and navigation radars. After chasing some DBR gremlins early on, we have seen increased reliability during each underway.

DBR will not be installed on board USS *John F. Kennedy* (CVN 79) and will be replaced by the Enterprise Air Surveillance Radar, so there will be challenges associated with this one off system, especially with spare parts, but we are working with the program office to mitigate them. DBR does not replace the SPN-41 or SPN-46, so the instrument landing and automatic carrier landing systems remain unchanged.

AWE and Bomb Buildup

Weapons are brought from the magazines via AWEs using four linear stator motor rails and permanent magnet generators on the platform to

USN, MC2 Brigitte Johnstone



Weapons department Sailors move training ordnance onto an advanced weapons elevator during an independent steaming exercise, 24 Nov '19.

move the elevator. This technology gives AWE twice the weight capacity and 150 percent the speed than the *Nimitz* class. It also provides increased survivability due to large in-trunk horizontal hatches closing behind the moving platform to provide a damage control barrier. The *Ford* design reduces the distance traveled from magazine to flight deck by 75 percent and eliminates the need to drag bomb skids through the mess decks. Seven lower stage elevators move weapons directly from the magazines to the weapons handling transfer areas (WHTA) or the hangar bay. These spacious WHTAs, located on the starboard side of the ship, replace the bomb farm and are the last stop before the roof. WHTAs keep the weapons out of the environment and allow for quick access to ready-to-use weapons. Four upper stage AWEs move weapons from the 02 level WHTAs to the flight deck.

Ford will embark around 200 shipyard workers during PDT and T to work AWE and provide NNS its best shot at delivering the lower stage elevators prior to FSST. NNS delivered four upper stage elevators to us last year, and they are working great. We have conducted around 7,000 cycles on them with only a few minor issues. We are confident NNS has worked through the technology concerns from a few years ago. We await delivery of our first lower stage elevator, and NNS is working feverishly to deliver three this year and the remaining four prior to FSST. We need the lower stage elevators to get delivered as soon as possible!

Wardrooms and Galleys

Based on a design used on *San Antonio*-class amphibious transport dock ships to great success, *Ford* has “conglomerate” galleys. One kitchen serves meals to the crew, chiefs and officers from different sides. The forward galley on the 02 level serves officers in the “dirty shirt” on one side and the crew on the other. The aft main deck galley serves the crew, wardroom and chiefs’ mess on three sides. The number of seats in the wardrooms and mess decks are lower than on the *Nimitz* class, and we will be identifying ways to minimize the impact of this design feature during PDT and T. We have been proactive in feeding the technical community design improvements for the galley and other areas throughout the ship. These modifications are being aggressively programmed into follow on ships.

Ready Rooms, Mission Planning Areas, Carrier Intelligence Center

We have eight ready rooms designed with a flexible infrastructure, which means they can receive quick network upgrades that do not require time-consuming space modifications. Ready rooms will be linked by a digital television network controlled by a collaborative system rack in the squadron duty officer desk to broadcast event briefs. Ready rooms one, six, seven and eight have a traditional ready room area, an operations officer (OPSO) office, a Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility (SCIF), Secure Tactical Briefing Room (STBR) and a flight gear storage room. Ready rooms two, three, four and five are adjacent to each other in a “four pack” configuration and have a ready room space only. However, just forward and aft of the “four pack” are two mission-planning areas (MPA) that contain brief/debrief/mission-planning spaces. This will be a mindset shift because one MPA will support OPSOs and schedules officers for four FA-18E/F squadrons and the other is arranged for brief/debriefs. Except for the officers club, it resembles the arrangement used in Fallon—MPAs are for tactical business while the ready rooms are for roll’ems, hit boards, acey-deucey and all officer meetings.

The Carrier Intelligence Center (CVIC) does not have a dedicated post-flight debrief area or a large-force strike planning/briefing space. However, the entire CVIC complex is a SCIF, which is a significant departure from the *Nimitz* class. One fourth of CVIC will be all special access programs all the time and include individual STBR spaces for briefing/debriefing.

Staterooms

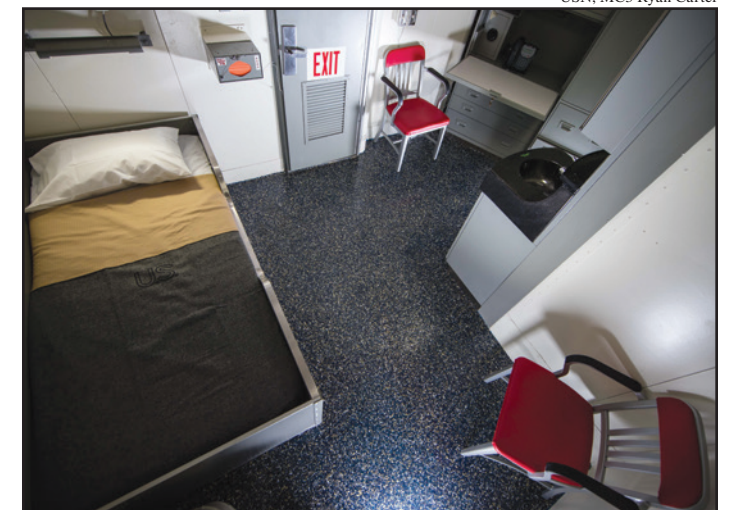
Every stateroom has a head and shower! There is no need for that awkward walk through cleaning stations in your wicked *Patriots* bathrobe. Electric potable water heater rooms throughout the ship with recirculation loops ensure instant heat to heads and showers. *Ford* makes water using reverse osmosis and doesn’t lose 400 gallons of water through a steam catapult launch, so we have more potable water than we need. Air wing personnel, take a shower as long as you want because you will not drive us to eat off paper plates. We also have large air-conditioning plants that provide double the total capacity of *Nimitz*, so you will be cold on board CVN 78.

Courage

We should be extremely proud of the Navy for having the boldness to build this ship. Navy designers could have assimilated a few new technologies into the *Nimitz* class, maintained the status quo and called it the “*Ford* class.” Instead, they completely cleaned off the white board, threw out the old ways of thinking and from stem to stern aggressively created this ship. That takes courage. Did that decision come with some risk? Absolutely, and that risk is inherent with any new weapon system. I can tell you that every day our Sailors are knocking down that risk and steamrolling obstacles as we make this ship better each day. WE ARE WARSHIP 78!

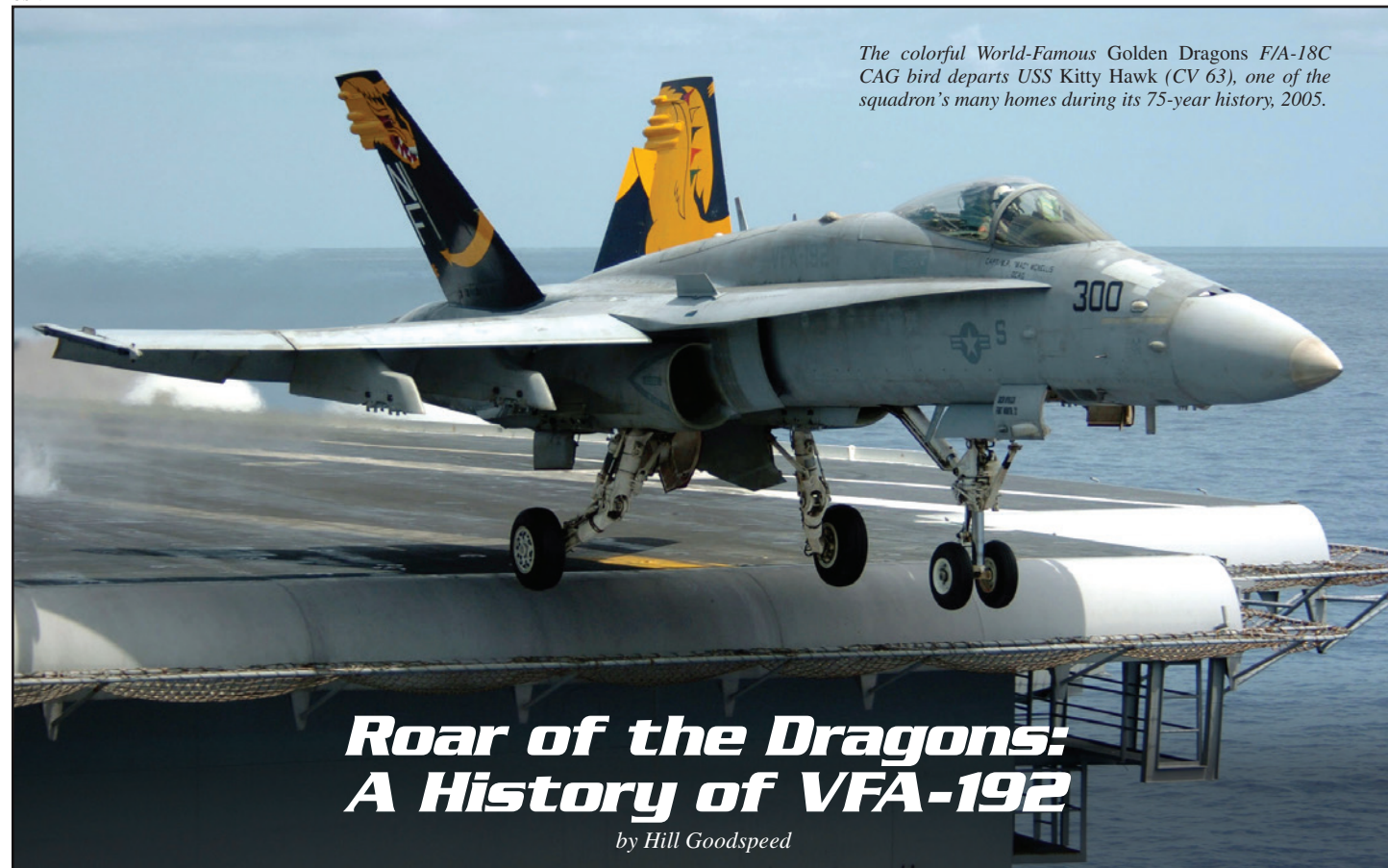


CSSN Riomy Mejiasanchez prepares dessert in the ship's main galley, 28 Jan '20.



Above: A single person stateroom prepared and furnished as CVN 78 completes Post Delivery Test and Trials, 2 Mar '20.

Below: Ford's ready room seven is poised for action as the Navy's newest carrier works her way toward initial deployment.



Just 12 days later the attack by North Korean forces across the 38th parallel into South Korea changed the fortunes of the squadron. Exchanging the *Bearcats* for F4U-4 *Corsairs*, squadron pilots prepared for a quick turn-around that would take them and the other squadrons of CVG-19 to the Western Pacific on board USS *Princeton* (CV 37). They also adopted a new insignia, a puffing dragon superimposed over the bow of an aircraft carrier.

By 5 December 1950, VF-192 aircraft were flying combat missions over the snowy landscape of the Chosin Reservoir in support of U.S. troops confronting an onslaught of Chinese forces that had crossed the Yalu River. They were joined in this effort by the F9F *Panthers* of the *Princeton*-based VF-191 *Satan's Kittens*, whose cadre of pilots consisted of members of the *Blue Angels*, the flight demonstration team having been disbanded for Korean War service. The pace of these initial operations was intense. An action report detailing CVG-19's close-air-support missions on 21–22 December alone included 30 flights ranging in size from two to nine aircraft. VF-192 *Corsairs* napalmed, bombed and strafed an array of targets including supply carts, fuel drums, train cars, structures and enemy troops. One day saw *Princeton* aircraft make 592 runs on targets. Weather did not deter their dedication to supporting the troops on the ground. On one mission VF-192 pilots descended through overcast on instruments to find a clearance of only a few hundred feet below the fog in the attack area. Despite the increased threat of enemy fire at this altitude, the *Corsairs* remained in the area providing close air support for as long as their fuel supply allowed.

A notable mission for the squadron came on 1 May 1951, when it supported the torpedo attack carried out against the Hwachon Dam by AD *Skyraiders* off *Princeton*. Eight VF-192 F4U-4s joined four from sister squadron VF-193 as fighter escort and flak suppressors for the landmark strike led by CAG CDR Richard C. Merrick, who was killed in action 17 days later. By the time the cruise concluded, VF-192 had suffered its share of losses with six aircraft shot down and the loss of three pilots.



VF-192 pilots smile for the camera from the cockpits of their F4U-4 Corsairs on board *Princeton* during Korean War combat operations, 1950–51.

“I feel very lucky to have been a *Golden Dragon*,” says former VFA-192 skipper and *Blue Angels* flight leader CAPT Ryan “Guido” Bernacchi. “I loved the way we worked together. The reverence for the squadron’s legacy, and the shoulders we stood on, was something very tangible, but more so was the humble pride in being a *Dragon*. It came from being a part of a team that produced quality airplanes, supported each other and worked incredibly hard getting after whatever mission came our way. SSHWFGD!”

The *Golden Dragon* legacy began on 26 March 1945. With America in the midst of its fourth year of war, the Navy established a new fighting squadron at NAS Atlantic City, N.J. In the Western Pacific the Japanese kamikaze attacks had intensified, and VF-153 was destined to combat them and support the planned invasion of the home islands. Leading the new squadron was LCDR Kenneth Hance, who wore the Distinguished Flying Cross for his role in sinking a German U-boat earlier in the war, while Naval Academy graduate LCDR George McFetridge served as executive officer. VF-153 was McFetridge’s first flying billet, but his service as a blackshoe had taken him aboard three flattops in campaigns from Midway to Tarawa, including swimming away from USS *Hornet* (CV 8) when she was sunk off Guadalcanal.

Flying operations began almost immediately in F6F-3/5 *Hellcats*. The weeks were filled with firing runs against towed target sleeves, honing ground attack skills using practice bombs and rockets and carrier qualification on board USS *Charger* (CVE 30). “With all its training completed the squadron was well prepared for any assignment in the combat area,” the war diary noted, but events changed the squadron’s course. “Due to the abrupt cessation of hostilities, VF-153 remained untried in combat but confident it could take any mission assigned to it.” The surrender of Japan and the end of World War II took place before the squadron’s insignia, a kangaroo wearing boxing gloves and holding rockets and machine gun bullets in its tail and pouch, received approval.

Naval Aviation’s drawdown from wartime levels proved arbitrary when it came to combat legacy, and VF-153 survived while other units that flew in the great air battles of the Pacific War faded into history. In August 1946 the squadron shifted to the West Coast, making NAS Alameda, Calif., its new home. The following November, a new system changed its designation to VF-15A, and personnel proposed a new

insignia featuring a knight’s helmet atop a shield. It remained in use when VF-15A redesignated to VF-151 on 15 July 1948.

During this period the squadron began operating the F8F *Bearcat*, a diminutive fighter built around a powerful Pratt & Whitney 2,100-hp engine, prompting many an aviator to comment that you strapped on a *Bearcat* rather than climbing into the cockpit. The squadron made its first cruise on board USS *Antietam* (CV 36) in *Hellcats*, embarking as VF-151 on a subsequent cruise in *Bearcats* as part of *Carrier Air Group Nineteen* (CVG-19) on board USS *Boxer* (CV 21) in January 1950. While at sea, VF-151’s designation again changed to VF-192. The squadron returned from the Far East deployment on 13 June 1950.

National Naval Aviation Museum



Flight-deck personnel wait to pull chocks on a VF-151 F8F-1 *Bearcat* before a deck launch from USS *Tarawa* (CV 40), 1948.

A VF-192 F4U-4 launches from USS *Princeton* (CV 37) for a close-air-support mission over Korea, 1950.



The squadron left their aircraft behind as *Princeton* remained in the Far East. Returning to the United States, VF-192 caught up with the jet age, or so it seemed, as the squadron accepted F9F-2 *Panthers* and made ready to operate from a new home in the shadows of the mammoth blimp hangars at NAS Moffett Field, Calif. However after just weeks, the squadron transferred its allotment of jets to VF-191 and returned to F4U cockpits for a second deployment off Korea.

Missions for the squadron included interdiction against the enemy transportation network, including at night to complement the pilots of VC-3. The relatively static nature of the front lines decreased the requirements for close air support that had been prevalent on the previous cruise. *Princeton's* action report also noted, "More and more, the major effort shifted to targets of a strategic nature: power plants, mining activities, factories..." VF-192 pilots were therefore part of some of the largest air strikes of the war, including Joint operations with USAF aircraft. Statistics for a 28 July 1952, attack against the Kilchu magnesite plant and associated facilities reveal the scope of the effort, with 38 CVG-19 aircraft in two strike groups unleashing 40 tons of bombs on the targets.

The intense pace of operations and enemy defenses took their toll. In one month alone, 16 air group aircraft were lost or damaged in mishaps or combat action. Two VF-192 pilots had contrasting experiences. LCDR Gervase Struegel lost two aircraft during the cruise, on one occasion bailing out after suffering an engine failure during a bombing run and on another ditching when the engine failed while on approach for recovery on board *Princeton*. Squadron skipper CDR Elwin A. "Ace" Parker, who

National Naval Aviation Museum

served as squadron executive officer on the 1951 cruise, reached his 100th combat mission and 300 combat hours during the 1952 deployment, also logging the 18,000th landing on board *Princeton*. He did so, recounted an article in *Naval Aviation News*, "without ever sustaining as much as a small bullet hole in his plane."

The second time proved the charm for VF-192 when transitioning to jets. The squadron flew F9F-2s briefly after returning home before receiving the F9F-5, which it took to sea on board USS *Oriskany* (CVA 34) for the first of two cruises that began just weeks after the armistice ended hostilities in Korea. Once again assigned to CVG-19, which was under the command of CDR James "Jig Dog" Ramage, VF-192 had a notable first cruise in jets. During one 12-day period, pilots flew their *Panthers* ashore to Johnson AB outside Tokyo to experience the life lived by their counterparts in the 40th Fighter Interceptor Squadron. With dragons painted prominently on the noses of their aircraft, VF-192 pilots took their turn standing alerts from before sunrise to after sunset, practicing getting to their planes in just three minutes at the sound of the alarm and launching in 90 seconds. The squadron made a number of practice intercepts before returning to the more familiar spaces of a flattop at sea.

This period also included a taste of Hollywood life as squadron personnel supported the filming of "Men of the Fighting Lady" and "The Bridges at Toko-Ri." The unit's aircraft figured prominently in the latter, visible in brilliant color for the carrier and aerial sequences depicting William Holden and his squadron flying combat missions in the Korean War.



With dragons adorning their noses, VF-192 F9F-5s await the signal to taxi forward on board USS *Oriskany* (CVA 34). Squadron *Panthers* starred in "The Bridges at Toko-Ri."



Among the aircraft flown by the Golden Dragons after redesignation as VA-192 was the FJ-4B Fury, pictured soaring over Mt. Fuji in 1959.

The conclusion of the 1955 deployment on board *Oriskany* brought yet another change. On 15 March 1956, after more than a decade of service as a fighter squadron, VF-192 became VA-192. Its new identity as an attack squadron coincided with the adoption of the nickname *Golden Dragons*. A new insignia featured a more ferocious dragon, the inclusion of an atomic symbol and mushroom cloud representing the squadron's special weapons delivery capability flying new F9F-6 *Cougars*. The first and only cruise in the *Cougar* came on board the venerable *Fighting Lady*, USS *Yorktown* (CVA 10), followed by transition to the FJ-4B *Fury* and the beginning of a string of six deployments on board USS *Bon Homme Richard* (CVA 31).

On 1 July 1959, in a unique reorganization, the *Golden Dragons* exchanged aircraft and personnel, including commanding officers, with the VA-216 *Black Diamonds*. VA-192's new mount was the A4D-2 *Skyhawk*, with the squadron making its first deployment in the type in 1959-1960 on board *Bonnie Dick*, accepting the all-weather A4D-2N upon return from a Western Pacific (WESTPAC) deployment. On 1 January 1962, the Imperial Valley beckoned and VA-192 shifted its operations from NAS Moffett Field to the Navy's newest Master Jet Base, NAS Lemoore. In the ensuing years, *Skyhawks* emblazoned with the insignias of many Navy A-4 squadrons departed Lemoore's runways bound for combat over Vietnam. The deadly skies claimed more *Skyhawks* than any other aircraft in the Navy's inventory.

Following a quick work-up cycle after returning from a 10-month deployment to the Indian Ocean and WESTPAC, the *Golden Dragons* headed to war in April 1965. This first cruise coincided with the inauguration of the interdiction campaign over North Vietnam called *Operation Rolling Thunder*. The squadron's



A-4C Skyhawks of VA-192 fly in formation during work ups prior to the Golden Dragons' first Vietnam War cruise, Jan 1965.



The charred battle-damaged A-4E Skyhawk that LCDR Mike Estocin managed to fly back to USS Ticonderoga (CVA 14) on 20 Apr '67, one of the heroic actions for which he received the Medal of Honor.

Skyhawks logged 5,783 flight hours, flew more than 2,800 combat missions and delivered over 5 million pounds of ordnance. The return from this cruise marked the end of the squadron's operations from *Bonnie Dick* as CVW-19 shifted to USS *Ticonderoga* (CVA 14) for its 1966-'67 combat cruise, during which VA-192 flew newly acquired A-4Es. The *Golden Dragons* were part of the most intense aerial combat of the war, facing anti-aircraft artillery and surface-to-air missiles (SAM) defending industrial targets in Hanoi and Haiphong.

To counter the latter threat, A-4Es carrying AGM-45 *Shrike* anti-radiation missiles went in ahead of the strike aircraft in an effort to take out SAM sites, which involved dodging deadly missiles fired at them. This mission was known as *Iron Hand*, and the most aggressive pilot carrying it out was VA-192 Operations Officer LCDR Mike Estocin. "Mike was one of the few who enjoyed dueling with SAMs," recalled CDR John B. Nichols, an F-8 *Crusader* pilot who flew escort for these missions. "He was not content to merely suppress the enemy batteries—he wanted to shoot them with *Shrikes*—to go for the 'hard kill' rather than the 'mission kill'."

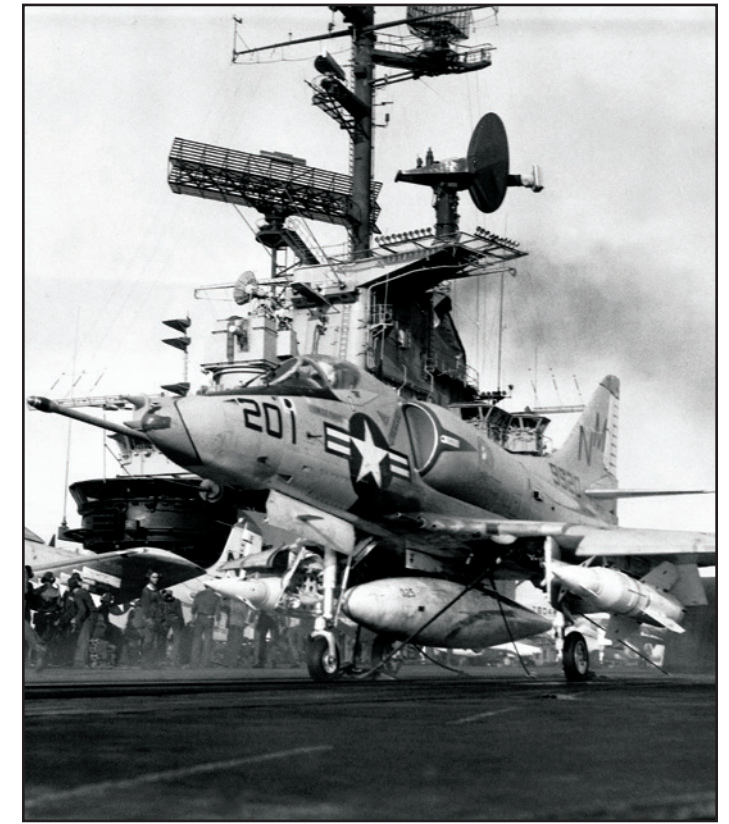
On a 20 April 1967 mission, Estocin attacked three SAM sites. His jet sustained so much damage that he tanked for some 100 miles until making an arrested landing with his plane on fire and fuel streaming from it. Six days later, with Nichols on his wing, Estocin was targeting a SAM site in advance of a strike against a thermal power plant in Haiphong when the two aviators observed a missile launch. It detonated below Estocin's *Skyhawk*, peppering the nose and cockpit with holes, almost completely destroying the port intake and igniting a fire on the underside of the fuselage. Estocin seemed to regain control of the airplane after it was thrown into an inverted nose down attitude, but when Nichols flew alongside the crippled A-4E as it slowed and descended, he observed Estocin with his head down and not moving. He followed the airplane through some overcast and watched it hit the ground. For his heroic actions on those two days, Estocin received the Medal of Honor posthumously,

Naval History and Heritage Command



LCDR Mike Estocin

The Hook, Spring 2020



Loaded with AGM-12 Bullpup missiles, a VA-192 A-4 Skyhawk prepares to roar off the cat on a combat mission over North Vietnam.

National Naval Aviation Museum

one of only two tailhook recipients of the nation's highest honor during the Vietnam War. To this day, his widow Marie is on hand each year at the Tailhook Symposium to present the Michael J. Estocin Award to the Navy's top strike fighter squadron.

The other VA-192 pilot shot down that day, LTJG John W. Cain, was in the Alfa strike Estocin was supporting and suffered damage to his *Skyhawk* that filled his cockpit with smoke and knocked out his radio, electronics and hydraulics. While heading toward the Tonkin Gulf, his plane began to roll at an altitude of some 2,000 feet and Cain ejected, landing in the water near the mouth of the Haiphong River just 250 yards off the shore of Do San Island. LT Steve Millikin, later editor of *The Hook*, and his crew in their SH-3A *Sea King* arrived overhead and pulled Cain from the water while under fire from mortars and machine guns.

VA-192 made two more deployments in *Skyhawks*, the last from the squadron's old roost *Oriskany*, before returning to NAS Lemoore in November 1969. The following February the *Golden Dragons*' skipper and executive officer flight delivered the squadron's first A-7E *Corsair II* attack aircraft from the Vought factory in Dallas, some two decades after their predecessors accepted the previous airplane to carry that nickname.

Two cruises followed on board *Kitty Hawk* (CVA 63), marking the first time the squadron had not flown from an *Essex*-class carrier. However, one pilot may have become a bit nostalgic for the old days during the 1970-'71 deployment. The carrier's cruise book notes the late return of one VA-192 pilot from a strike with the traditional graffiti on his plane after landing on board *Hancock* (CVA 19). The squadron history for the cruise noted a new nickname for VA-192, the "Laotian Highway Patrol," with *Golden Dragons* A-7Es accumulating 6,600 flight hours and dropping 15.2 million pounds of ordnance on enemy supply routes day and night in all kinds of weather without the loss of a single airplane. The sixth and final Vietnam combat cruise encompassed 192 days on *Yankee Station* and included support of the intense aerial campaign against North Vietnam called *Operation Linebacker I* and participation in the mining of Haiphong Harbor.



A-7E Corsair IIs flew the last Vietnam combat missions for VA-192 after replacing the squadron's Skyhawks in 1970.



The Hook, Spring 2020

Returning in late 1972, VA-192 embarked on a 13-year period of regular deployments that took the *Golden Dragons* to WESTPAC, the Indian Ocean, Mediterranean Sea and the coast of Central America, the latter to be ready to respond to political unrest in Nicaragua in the summer of 1983. The squadron operated from *Kitty Hawk*, *USS Ranger* (CV 61) and *USS America* (CV 66), with a stint ashore at MCAS Iwakuni as part of *Marine Aircraft Group 12*.

The year 1986 brought a redesignation to VFA-192 that coincided with acceptance of the F/A-18A *Hornet*. The squadron became part of the forward-deployed CVW-5 operating from the Japan-based *USS Midway* (CV 41). At sea in their new strike fighters, the *Dragons* supported *Operation Earnest Will* in the Persian Gulf, provided a show of force off Seoul, South Korea, during the 1988 Summer Olympics and in the summer of 1990 deployed as part of the large assemblage of naval forces in response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

The commencement of *Operation Desert Storm* took the *Golden Dragons* into harm's way, with the squadron scribe reporting to *The Hook* that "Mk 83s, *Rockeye* and *HARM* missiles" were unleashed on missions "deep into Iraqi territory," with *Rockeyes* "put on target to disable gunboats and oil platforms." VFA-192 compiled 576 combat sorties and delivered 730,000 pounds of ordnance in the swan song for the F/A-18A, the squadron upgrading to the F/A-18C in August 1991.

National Naval Aviation Museum



VFA-192 began flying its new F/A-18A Hornets, pictured in formation in 1989, as part of the Forward-Deployed Naval Forces, operating initially at sea from *USS Midway* (CV 41).

USN, LT Robert Nordlund



A VFA-192 F/A-18E Rhino flies wing on a USAF B-1B Lancer over the Philippine Sea during Joint operations while on a Western Pacific cruise on board *USS Carl Vinson* (CVN 70), 14 Feb '17.

A decade later the 9/11 terrorist attacks sent the *Golden Dragons* into combat again. The squadron was now operating from the same flight deck from which their Vietnam predecessors had launched when *Kitty Hawk* replaced *Midway* as the forward-deployed carrier in Japan. No-notice mobilizations became the norm, with VFA-192 personnel deploying aboard ship flying interdiction and close-air-support missions over Afghanistan as part of *Operation Enduring Freedom* and also standing alerts on Diego Garcia.

On 12 December 2002, VFA-192 was in the air when the *Hornet* program eclipsed 5 million total flight hours. The squadron added to that total the following year by leading CVW-5 in the number of missions flown in support of *Operation Iraqi Freedom* (OIF), delivering 224,000 pounds of ordnance and launching 283 Joint Direct Attack Munitions and laser-guided bombs on 339 trips over the beach. A department head in the squadron at that time, CAPT Tom Frosch, USN(Ret) recalled that he and LT Chris Smith had the distinction of flying the squadron's first and last combat missions of the cruise. The pair delivered 2,000-lb. bombs on bunkers days before the first large-scale strikes of OIF and made low-level strafing runs supporting troops on the ground to conclude the squadron's time in combat. A future flight leader of the *Blue Angels*, Frosch recalled that walking into the *Golden Dragons* ready room was memorable because of the rich heritage of the squadron from the yellow main gear struts on the squadron's *Hornets* to the yellow socks worn by pilots. "The recipe for success in Naval Aviation is good people and tradition," Frosch said. "In the *Golden Dragons*, we had good Sailors who bought into the traditions of the squadron."

Returning to patrols in the Western Pacific, the squadron made the "last ride" on board *Kitty Hawk* before her return to the United States for decommissioning. VFA-192 also returned stateside in 2009, joining CVW-9 at NAS Lemoore and deploying on board *USS John C. Stennis* (CVN 74).

Transitioning to the F/A-18E *Super Hornet*, the *Golden Dragons* received their Safe-for-Flight Certification in 2014, with reassignment to CVW-2 operating from *USS Carl Vinson* (CVN 70), where the squadron continues to project power around the globe. Frosch recalled from his time in VFA-192 that "The Bridges at Toko-Ri" was required watching to imbue pilots with the squadron's heritage. The movie played in the ready room en route to OIF. The lines uttered by fictional RADM Tarrant in the book on which the movie is based ring true in describing the Naval Aviators who have served in the SSHWFGD. "They leave this tiny ship and fly against the enemy. Then they must seek the ship, lost somewhere on the sea. And when they find it, they have to land upon its pitching deck. Where did we get such men?"



Training Tales

by The Hook Staff



An instructor and student with an N3N trainer at NAS Pensacola, 1941.

Flight students beginning their course of instruction in Aviation Preflight Indoctrination at NAS Pensacola assemble what is known as their Aviation Training Jacket (ATJ). It follows them through flight training, recording their training flights, both good and bad, and providing the proverbial paper trail for their path to Wings of Gold. Though not always called ATJs, these records of individual trainees have been around from virtually the beginning of Naval Aviation. Presented here are excerpts from the records of familiar names from history providing a window to the time when they first took flight.



SQUADRON VN5D8			
Stage	Period	Date 17 August 1936. (date)	Mark
I have read and understand Squadron Student Orders 1 to 16 inclusive, the H-G Manual and the flying instructions of Squadron Five.			
Signature: [Signature]			
Stage	Period	Date 9-8-36	Mark
Time 5.0			
FAMILIARIZATION LANDINGS: Slightly above average. Never makes a real bad landing. Has a tendency to be a bit anxious on his take-offs and thus pulls them off occasionally.			
Signature: D. L. McDONALD			3.10
Stage	Period	Date 9-11-36	Mark
Time 5.1			
PRECISION LANDINGS: Slightly below average. A bit fast - greatly improved at the last.			
Signature: D. L. McDONALD			2.95
Stage	Period	Date 9-10-36	Mark
Time 2.0			
NIGHT LANDINGS & NIGHT CROSS COUNTRY: Very good.			
Signature: J. A. RUDY			3.40
Stage	Period	Date	Mark
Time 4.0			
FAMILIARIZATION PRACTICE FOR PRIMARY ACROBATICS			
Signature			
Stage	Period	Date	Mark
Time			
Signature			
Total Flight Time	16.1	Student	McCain, J.S.
		Rank or Rate	Captain, USN
Final Mark	3.150	Completed Squadron VN5D8	J. R. TATE
			Signature

An Act of Congress passed in June 1926 mandated that only Naval Aviators could command air stations, aviation training schools and squadrons. It also stated that all aircraft carriers and seaplane tenders be commanded by Naval Aviators or Naval Aviation Observers. The latter designation was for a flying officer not qualified to actually take the controls of an aircraft, but proficient in areas like navigation, gunnery, radio communication and aerial spotting—the forerunner of the modern Naval Flight Officer.

Since the pioneer aviators had all been junior officers when Naval Aviation began in 1911, there were virtually no officers of the requisite rank qualified for these commands. Seeing the opportunity for advancement of their careers in the new arena of warfare, a number of senior officers applied for flight training and reported to NAS Pensacola, training alongside men who in some cases were half their age. The younger aviators attached a derisive nickname to these older officers—“Johnny Come Lately.”

Among them in the years before World War II were CAPTs William F. Halsey Jr. and John S. McCain, the latter seen sitting for his photograph in a more formal uniform than the Naval Aviation cadets of the day. Despite crashing an O3U-1 *Corsair* during a solo flight, which required a special check ride to allow him to continue his instruction, McCain ultimately received his wings. One of his instructors was LT David L. McDonald, his signature and comments visible on the previous page from McCain’s record. McDonald served as Chief of Naval Operations during the early years of the Vietnam War, which greatly impacted the McCain family.

Halsey had his own troubles during his instruction, receiving the Medal of the Benevolent Order of the “The Flying Jackass,” which was awarded to a flight student who committed a blunder. In Halsey’s case this was running over boundary lights along the edge of a runway. He relinquished the medal only when another flight student committed an act worthy of the award.

McCain eventually commanded Task Force 38 under Halsey when the latter was *Commander, Third Fleet*. Both stood on the deck of USS *Missouri* (BB 63) in Tokyo Bay observing the signing of the surrender ending WW II.



U. S. N.V.L AIR STATION
Pensacola, Florida

FITNESS REPORT FOR STUDENT OFFICERS OR CADETS

Name HALL, W.E. . Rank AV., USNR . Class 117-C .

While under training in VN3D8 from 3-31-39 to 6-13-39, incl.

Outstanding	3.9 to 3.8	Below average	3.1 to 2.5
Above average	3.7 to 3.5	Unsatisfactory	2.4 to 2.0
Average	3.4 to 3.2	Inferior	1.9 to 0.0

:Mark:	:MARK :
: Intelligence.....: 3.1 :	: Loyalty.....: 3.2 :
: Judgement.....: 3.1 :	: Perseverance.....: 3.2 :
: Initiative.....: 3.0 :	: Reactions in Emergencies.....: 3.0 :
: Force.....: 2.9 :	: Endurance: 3.1 :
: Moral Courage.....: 3.1 :	: Industry.....: 3.0 :
: Cooperation.....: 3.1 :	: Military bearing; neatness of: person and dress.....: 3.1 :
: AVERAGE _____ : 3.07 :	

1. Has the work of this ~~officer~~ - cadet been reported on either in a commendatory way or adversely during the period of this report? If so, state the substance of the report.

No.

2. Has he any weakness - mental, moral; physical, etc., which adversely affects his efficiency? (If "Yes", give details.)

No.

3. In comparison with other ~~officers~~ - cadets of his rank and approximate length of service, how would you designate him?
Outstanding ____ . Above average ____ . Average ____ . Below average X .

Remarks: Cover in this space (1) His disposition and character, (2) His handling of regular and additional duties.

Cadet Hall is below average aviation material. He is interested and tries hard but is handicapped by a lack of self confidence. His duties have been handled satisfactorily.

[Signature]
(Instructor)

Remarks: Progress and aptitude have been below average.

[Signature]
P.E. COFFIN
(Unit Commander)

MARINE CORPS AVIATION ASSOCIATION

John R. Dailey "Zorro" Squadron Reunion









May 10-12, 2020

Wyndham Bayside

San Diego, California

Due to Coronavirus, Postponed Until Further Notice

Part of the training of an aviation cadet (AVCAD) included evaluating his officerlike qualities, and in this process some of the instructors were not always correct. One rated AVCAD William E. Hall below average. "He is interested and tries hard but is handicapped by a lack of self confidence." This was hardly an accurate description

of an aviator who at the Battle of the Coral Sea on 7-8 May 1942, attacked a Japanese carrier and was wounded while aggressively defending USS Lexington (CV 2) against torpedo plane attacks while flying an SBD Dauntless dive bomber. For his actions he received the Medal of Honor.



AVCAD Marion E. Carl may not have received the wings visible on his chest in this photograph taken at NAS Pensacola. This paper from the previous year confined him to base awaiting adjudication of the infraction of "Skylarking and unnecessary maneuvering in vicinity of another airplane." Transcripts from a board investigating the incident record its details from the perspective of the reporting officer, who said he observed Carl for two minutes "apparently attempting to dog fight with another plane; the other plane refused to participate. Carl then flew parallel to the other plane ... and started duplicating the second plane's maneuvers. When I approached Carl to ascertain his [plane] number, he intentionally did a sharp turn or wingover at and around my plane."

Carl ended up being grounded and received extra demerits for violating flight safety rules. His actions reflected the skills and spirit that made him a leading WW II ace and acclaimed test pilot.

PENSACOLA-NAS
7-500

A.C.B. Form 2-A
U. S. NAVAL AIR STATION
PENSACOLA, FLORIDA

AVIATION CADET BATTALION

Having been reported for a class "A" offense
Skylarking and unnecessary maneuvering in vicinity of another airplane.
.....
(Offense)

on 3 May 1939 You are by direction of the Commandant restricted to the limits of the station, pending final action in your case. You are authorized to participate in athletic activities within the station limits by obtaining permission from the A-O.O.D. (Reserve) and informing him of your whereabouts. You are not to attend the Officers' Club or use its privileges.

F. E. WILSON
.....
Officer-in-Charge Cadet Barracks

I understand the restrictions imposed upon me.

/s/ M. E. CARL Class 12
.....
Aviation Cadet, U.S.N.R.

This form will be made out in quadruplicate by the Officer in Charge, Cadet Barracks who will place the cadet under the restriction shown above.

Original to Commandant.
1 Copy to Cadet concerned.
1 Copy (S.A.T.), 1 Copy File.

PTB Form #46 PERSONNEL INFORMATION SHEET
Print in Ink

Service Number 705-53-11 Flight Class 12-B-43 P(C)

Aviation Cadet WILLIAMS THEODORE SAMUEL
(Last Name) (First) (Middle) USNR or USNR

25 Aug 30 - 1918 San Diego, Calif.
(Age last birthday) (Date of Birth) (Place of Birth)

Years of school: Grammar 8 High 4 Prep none Tech none College none

Name of Collage _____ Location _____
Name of College _____ Location _____

Degree(s) Rec'v _____ Varsity Athletics Baseball 3 yrs

Reason college course was not completed _____

PREVIOUS AVIATION TRAINING:
Elimination Base N.A.S. Bunker Hill

Number of hours of dual instruction 40 Number of hours solo 59
From: Sept 9 1943 To Dec. 6 - 8 1943

Private at AMHERT, MASS Number hours 35 hrs
From: Nov. 20 1943 to Feb. 20 1943

C.A.A. License Number _____ General Remarks _____

PREVIOUS MILITARY TRAINING
(In school or Branch of Service)

_____ (Years) _____ (Commission)

Permanent Home Address 4121 Utah St. San Diego, Calif.
(Street Number) (City) (State)

Next of kin, Name Mrs May Williams Relationship Mother

Permanent home address 4121 Utah St. San Diego, Calif.
(Street Number) (City) (State)

Religion Protestant Date reported USNATC Pensacola DAVID

Date DEC-7-1943 Signature Theodore Samuel Williams
(Month) (Day) (Year)

Two years to the day after bombs fell on Pearl Harbor drawing the United States into WW II, Theodore Samuel Williams completed this personnel information sheet. The only mention of the skills that defined

the 25-year-old enlistee eventually known as the "Splendid Splinter" and enshrined in the Baseball Hall of Fame was a notation that he played three years of high-school baseball.



TRAINING DEPARTMENT STATISTICAL RECORD, N.A.S. Miami, Florida

NAME: **Gay** **George H. Jr.** **A.C.** **USNR** **4A-41J(C)**

SIGNAL OR SERVICE NUMBER: **8 18 41** REPORTED: MO. DAY YR. DETACHED: **10 14 41** MO. DAY YR.

PREVIOUS FLIGHT TRAINING: **Miami, Florida** N.R.A.B. (GIVE NAME OF BASE): **None** C.A.A. (GIVE SCHOOL AND EXACT COURSE): **None**

OTHER (WHERE AND HOW OBTAINED): **None**

TOTAL FLIGHT TIME PRIOR TO STARTING NAVAL FLIGHT TRAINING: **None** HRS. TOTAL FLIGHT TIME ON DETACHMENT (i.e., on graduation, transfer or washout): **90.5** HRS. NUMBER OF GROUND SCHOOL FAILURES: **None**

ADVANCED TRAINING: **Carrier Miami, Florida** DATE(S) OF ADVISORY BOARD: **--** APPEARANCE(S):

REASON FOR DETACHMENT (check reason which applies): GRADUATION, TRANS. FOR ADV. YR., DROPPED: IF GRADUATED, ASSIGNMENT: **VT - 8** IF TRANSFERRED TO WHICH STATION: **USS Hornet**

(1) STAGE AT WHICH DROPPED: (2) DID HE WISH TO CONTINUE? YES NO NOT KNOWN

IF DROPPED: (3) REASON(S) FOR FAILURE:

REMARKS: (in particular describe reason(s) for failure)

A statistical record created during AVCAD George H. Gay Jr.'s flight training points to his future assignment to VT-8 on board USS Hornet (CV 8). Just months later at the Battle of Midway, he was the

sole survivor of the carrier-based element of that squadron, floating in the Pacific with a ringside seat to the destruction of Japanese aircraft carriers.



U. S. NAVAL AIR STATION
PENSACOLA, FLORIDA

FITNESS REPORT FOR STUDENT OFFICERS OR CADETS

Name **McCAMPBELL, D** Rank **LT(jg)** Class **103-0**

While under training in **TS-5** Date, from **4/6/38** to **5/13/38** inclusive

Outstanding	3.9 to 3.8	Below average	3.1 to 2.5
Above average	3.7 to 3.5	Unsatisfactory	2.4 to 2.0
Average	3.4 to 3.2	Inferior	1.9 to 0.0

Intelligence	3.8	Loyalty	3.9
Judgment	3.7	Perseverance	3.8
Initiative	3.8	Reactions in Emergencies	3.7
Force	3.8	Endurance	3.8
Moral Courage	3.9	Industry	3.8
Cooperation	3.8	Military bearing; neatness of person and dress	3.9
AVERAGE		3.81	

1. Has the work of this officer - cadet been reported on either in a commendatory way or adversely during the period of this report? If so, state the substance of the report.
No

2. Has he any weakness - mental, moral, physical, etc., which adversely affect his efficiency? (If "Yes", give details.)
No

3. In comparison with other officers - cadets of his rank and approximate length of service, how would you designate him?
Outstanding Above average Average Below average

Remarks: Cover in this space (1) His disposition and character, (2) His handling of regular and additional duties.
This officer has impressed me very much by his reliability and good judgment under all conditions. He is calm, unexcitable and should be a definite asset to any organization. He has handled his additional duties in a very satisfactory manner.

Concur
J. P. V. [Signature]
Unit Commander.

Instructors recognized in ENS David McCampbell the outstanding qualities that he brought to command first VF-15 and then Air Group 15 on board USS Essex (CV 9) in 1943-'44. In the great air battles of

the Pacific, the Medal of Honor recipient became the Navy's leading ace with 34 kills.



IN MARSHAL

Command Changes



CVW-2
CAPT Matthew Thrasher relieved
CAPT Gregory Newkirk
11 December 2019
NAS Lemoore



USS SOMERSET (LPD 25)
CAPT David Kurtz relieved
CAPT Stewart Bateshanski
22 November 2019
NavBase San Diego



VFA-137
CDR Louis Catalina IV relieved
CDR Jason Eurick
25 April 2020
NAS Lemoore



CVW-8
CAPT Joshua Sager relieved
CAPT Vorrice J. Burks
5 March 2019
NAS Oceana



VAQ-132
CDR Kerry Hicks relieved
CDR Douglas White
27 February 2020
NAS Whidbey Island



VFC-12
CDR Matthew D. Runzel relieved
CDR Rip P. Gordon
14 March 2020
NAS Oceana



NAS JRB FORT WORTH
CAPT Wayne D. Oetinger relieved
CAPT Richard A. Vaccaro
6 December 2019



VFA-14
CDR Erik Kenny relieved
CDR Matthew Nieswand
5 December 2019
NAS Lemoore



VT-9
CDR Meghan Angermann relieved
CDR Brian Baumgaertner
14 February 2020
NAS Meridian



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CVW-1 staff conducts a little "hand flying" on board USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75).



USS Harry S. Truman
CAPT Kavon Hakimzadeh



CVW-1
CAPT Robert Gentry

CVW-1 TEAM TARBOX

by LT Frank "Siri" Bonner, USN

Team Tarbox has not wasted any time projecting power abroad since leaving home port in November. In addition to the typical expectations of a forward-deployed air wing, the Carrier Air Wing One (CVW-1) team has also displayed prowess in warfare of the distinguished visitor (DV) variety. USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) and the Tarbox crew have hosted 77 DVs, including three U.S. ambassadors, various NATO allies, military leadership from five countries and one comedian.

DV embarks provide an opportunity to show that the air wing is ready and engaged to conduct the full spectrum of maritime operations and theater security cooperation missions, working alongside allies and partners, to maintain freedom of the seas.

The Truman Carrier Strike Group is deployed to the U.S. Fifth Fleet area of responsibility (AOR) in support of naval operations to ensure maritime stability and security in both Fifth and Sixth Fleets, connecting the Mediterranean to the Pacific through the Indian Ocean and three strategic choke points. During this deployment Gen Kenneth McKenzie Jr., USMC, Commander, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), visited Truman and CVW-1 while underway. The visit was part of a multiweek tour of U.S. forces and assets in the region. "We achieve deterrence by being obviously and clearly ready to fight at a very high level, if we need to," McKenzie told the crew. "I may need you to fight. I hope I don't, but from what I've seen so far, this ship, this crew and this air wing will be ready if I need you."

Fifth Fleet's Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) Director, Royal Australian Air Force Air Commodore Benjamin Sleeman, and a small staff visited with the air wing team in an effort to familiarize CAOC leadership with U.S. Navy aircraft carrier operations and demonstrate carrier platform capabilities for future CAOC integration.

One major milestone attained recently was the 1,200th trap of CAG-1, CAPT Robert "Fitz" Gentry, highlighting a career spanning four decades of combat carrier aviation. This milestone occurred moments before the CAOC director touched down on board Harry S. Truman.

After arriving on station in Fifth Fleet, CVW-1 has sent 31 sorties over land in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel and 4,573 sorties in support of the combined defense of the Persian Gulf. While performing defensive counter air and surface search coordination duties, this team has professionally supported CAOC tasking to include show of presence, close air support and electronic warfare missions.

USN, LT Frankie Bonner



A dramatic photo taken as CAG-1 CAPT Robert "Fitz" Gentry touched down for his 1,200th arrested landing.



CDR Kenneth "Puck" Hockycko, left, pilot for the landmark flight, congratulates CAG Gentry on the occasion.

CVW-1 hails LTs Kyle "Lunch Date" Frank, Aaron "Handy" Werhan, Joseph "The Boz" McAuliffe and Matthew "BTM" Egeland. The close-knit team bids farewell to LCDRs Steve "Dry Rub" Lozano, Matthew "Turbo Panda" Deppen, Joseph "Pound" Ash, Caleb "Baggins" Levee and Kris "Wiki" Weible.

VFA-211 FIGHTING CHECKMATES

by LT Jake "Dancing Bear" Brouker, USN

Mother Tanuki is alive and well currently conducting combat operations in the CENTCOM AOR with her rightful custodian, the VFA-211 Fighting Checkmates. (Ed. Note: The Mutha trophy is the symbol of strike fighter spirit and currently held by VFA-211.)

Summarily earning the right to care for Tanuki for the next year due to the squadron's tremendous fighter spirit, VFA-211's Junior Officer Protection Association has lived up to the high expectations of stewardship. This fighter spirit permeates the command. Maintenance personnel can be seen every day wearing headbands emblazoned with the squadron's call sign, NIKEL UP!

The VFA-211 maintenance team's standard of excellence is a result of the unparalleled planning and execution exhibited as they led the flight line during the surge to 341 Rhinos with 11 up jets. This accomplishment culminated in a 10 full mission capable jet go the next day hosted by the Commander Strike Fighter Wing Atlantic (CSFWL) and his deputy commander. Subsequently, the Fighting Checkmate team earned a



The VFA-211 Fighting Checkmates team stands ready to defend the famous Mutha trophy on the flight deck of Truman, Jan 2020.

surprise visit from RDML Roy J. Kelly, Commander, Naval Air Force Atlantic, to laud the squadron's accomplishments and the example it set for the East Coast Rhino fleet. Three months later, the Checkmates were honored with the 2019 CSFWL Golden Wrench in recognition for the most superior maintenance team on the East Coast. This extraordinary level of performance has continued on deployment with 11 combat ready Rhinos ready to face Iranian aggression during a tumultuous period in Middle Eastern affairs.

VFA-211 and the rest of CVW-1 stand in harm's way on their third deployment in only two years, shielding the principles of American freedom from hostile infringement. We remain operationally prepared for every mission, and like former Checkmates who paved the way before us, we continue to epitomize leadership, train to lethality and protect the Checkmate legacy. NIKEL UP!

All Checkmate aircrew past and present are asked to join us for the 75th anniversary celebration of VFA-211's heritage the weekend of 12-14 June 2020. There will be a day full of camaraderie, history and storytelling. We hope you can join us. Please add yourself to the information list by emailing James.Cunningham1@navy.mil

VFA-136 KNIGHTHAWKS

by LT Ben "Cap'n Crunchberry" Vanderberry, USN

VFA-136 embarked on board Harry S. Truman on 15 November for its second combat deployment in as many years. Pulling out of Norfolk, the Truman and CVW-1 headed east to support operations in Fifth Fleet and relieve USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72).

The squadron immediately jumped back into carrier operational rhythm and began conducting missions in support of Fifth Fleet directives including Operations Freedom's Sentinel and Resolute Support.

In spite of heavy competition in the air wing, the Knighthawks were awarded the CVW-1 Top Hook for the latest line period on board Truman, which included the predeployment Sustainment Exercise and Composite Training Unit Exercise and the first month of deployment. The squadron combined for a grade point average of 3.79 and an overall boarding rate of 98 percent. The Knighthawks' commanding officer, CDR Justin "Jugs" Halligan, received the overall Top Hook for CVW-1 with a perfect 4.0 GPA and 100 percent boarding rate. LT Wes "Spectrum" Holt also finished in the Top Ten of the air wing, and Cap'n Crunchberry Vanderberry was awarded the Top Nugget award. CDR Halligan also received recognition for reaching 200 traps on board Truman, and LT Ryan "Magnum" Eichler reached the Centurion milestone.



USN



Awarded the coveted CVW-1 Top Hook, the VFA-136 Knighthawks dress for the occasion.

The squadron enjoyed some welcome time off during a port call in Duqm, Oman, in January. After the short break, CVW-1 was swiftly back in action, flying combat missions and conducting unit level training. The pilots of VFA-136 continued to advance in the strike fighter weapons and tactics syllabus through the completion of Level II, III and IV events.

VFA-136 has already flown over 1,000 hours and more than 650 sorties on this deployment and will continue to employ the mighty F/A-18E Super Hornet in any tasking it receives. The *Knighthawks'* achievements would not have been possible without the maintenance department's efforts to provide quality up aircraft and the entire squadron's hard work. As the *Knighthawks* continue to support naval operations to ensure maritime stability and security in the CENTCOM region, they will always WIN IN COMBAT!

VFA-81 SUNLINERS

by LTJG Kyra DeBoni, USN

The *Liners* made full use of some unexpected extra time at home by integrating with the air wing for a large-force employment conducted in the operating areas of Fleet Area Control and Surveillance Facility, Virginia Capes, and a carrier qualification event on board USS *John C. Stennis* (CVN 74).

In late fall, the *Liners* bid farewell to their loved ones and ventured on another deployment. The first few months underway came with the celebration of Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's aboard ship. In true *Sunliner* fashion, the squadron embraced the holidays by sharing laughs and each other's company gathered around the lavish holiday meals provided by the enthusiastic CVW-1 and *Truman* culinary specialists of Wardroom III.

Capitalizing on every opportunity to train while on deployment, LT Amanda "Stalin" Lee earned her strike fighter weapons and tactics Level IV qualification and became a combat division lead. The *Sunliners* also minted three new LSO wing qualifications: LTs Karl "Krampus" Knight, Russell "Hotcakes" Simons and Kyle "Huggie" Treacy. With the arrival of the New Year, the squadron welcomed new faces and said goodbye to Huggie as he made his way off the ship to attend TOPGUN and head to VX-9.

After more than 60 grueling days at sea with no port in the Mediterranean and no beer day, the squadron spent the first port call of the 2019–2020 deployment in Duqm, Oman. The *Sunliners* quickly discovered the double-stacked Conex shipping boxes encircling a concrete paradise where we mingled with the rest of the air wing and ship's company. Draining every last drop out of the "Oasis of Oman," the *Liners* made the most of it by relaxing with adult beverages and after dinner mints, playing cards, riding a malnourished camel and singing along to the cacophony of competing playlists. The highlight of the port visit was a private dinner hosted at one of the two hotels in Duqm, where the *Liners* held a farewell for LT Alex "Big Perm" Mensing prior to her departure to attend the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School.

Rebounding from the experience of Duqm and regaining tactical focus, Sailors burned the midnight oil earning mission essential qualifications and maintaining a keen focus on the mission at hand. The *Sunliners* continue to take the fight to the enemy, ANYTIME, ANYPLACE!

USN, MCSA Isaac Esposito



An F/A-18E Super Hornet assigned to the VFA-81 Sunliners taxis on Truman's flight deck during operations in the Arabian Sea, 10 Jan '20.



Golden Dragons officers gather in front of the VFA-192 F/A-18E CAG bird.

CVW-2 GEARS UP FOR WORK UPS

by LCDR James "Dunnage" Russo, USN

Carrier Air Wing Two (CVW-2) under the leadership of CAPT Matthew "Trash" Thrasher has a renewed sense of vigor and purpose. The *Broadsword* team started 2020 preparing for the work-up cycle with the air wing of the future. CVW-2 is slated to join CVW-9 on board USS *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN 72) refreshing their pilot carrier currency.

The *Broadsword* squadrons got off to a quick start after holiday leave periods. The HSC-4 *Black Knights* spent January practicing day and night deck landing qualifications on small deck ships and flying training exercises deploying Navy and Coast Guard special operations forces to a potentially hostile vessel in support of anti-piracy and embargo operations. In February they detached four aircraft to NAF El Centro, Calif., for a week practicing personnel recovery, close air support and direct action missions.

The VFA-192 *Golden Dragons* completed a three-month stream of transfers and acceptances, replacing Block I Lot 23/24 jets with Lot 37/42 APG-79-equipped *Rhinos* fresh from the Boeing assembly line. Additionally the *Dragons* celebrated the completion of strike fighter weapons and tactics (SFWT) Level IV qualification by LT Dylan "Mimsy" Nelson as well as SFWT Level III Section Lead qualifications by LTs Jake "Pongo" Pieper and Catherine "BARB" Drake. BARB and Pongo recently completed LSO school, just in time to work up VFA-192 for the upcoming carrier qualifications (CQ).

Team Broadsword will have a busy spring as Advanced Readiness Programs (ARP) begin for all platforms. The air wing will blend a basic integrated phase into the ARP syllabi to enable expeditious integration of the F-35C *Lightning II*. Platform integration will be foundational and help modernize the entire strike group. With the E-2D *Advanced Hawkeye* and EA-18G *Growler* upgrades and integration of the CMV-22 *Osprey* and F-35C, CVW-2 is transforming into a modern air wing. The future is now!

VAQ-136 GAUNTLETS

by LT Brian Wasdin, USN

During the last six months, the VAQ-136 *Gauntlets* participated in two Joint exercises across the country and sent aircrew to support other squadrons throughout the VAQ community. New faces are appearing regularly in *Gauntlet* spaces. VAQ-136 has received eight nuggets from VAQ-129 in support of *Team Ironclaw* and expanded into a seven jet EA-18G *Growler* squadron.

Last August the *Gauntlets* participated in *Exercise Northern Lightning* operating from Volk Field ANGB, Wis., where they spent two weeks integrating with USAF and USMC F-35 *Lightning IIs* in dynamic air-to-air and air-to-surface training. In October the *Gauntlets* detached to Nellis AFB, Nev., for *Neptune Falcon*, a Joint air interoperability exercise designed to maintain readiness and evaluate employment capabilities in a realistic training environment.

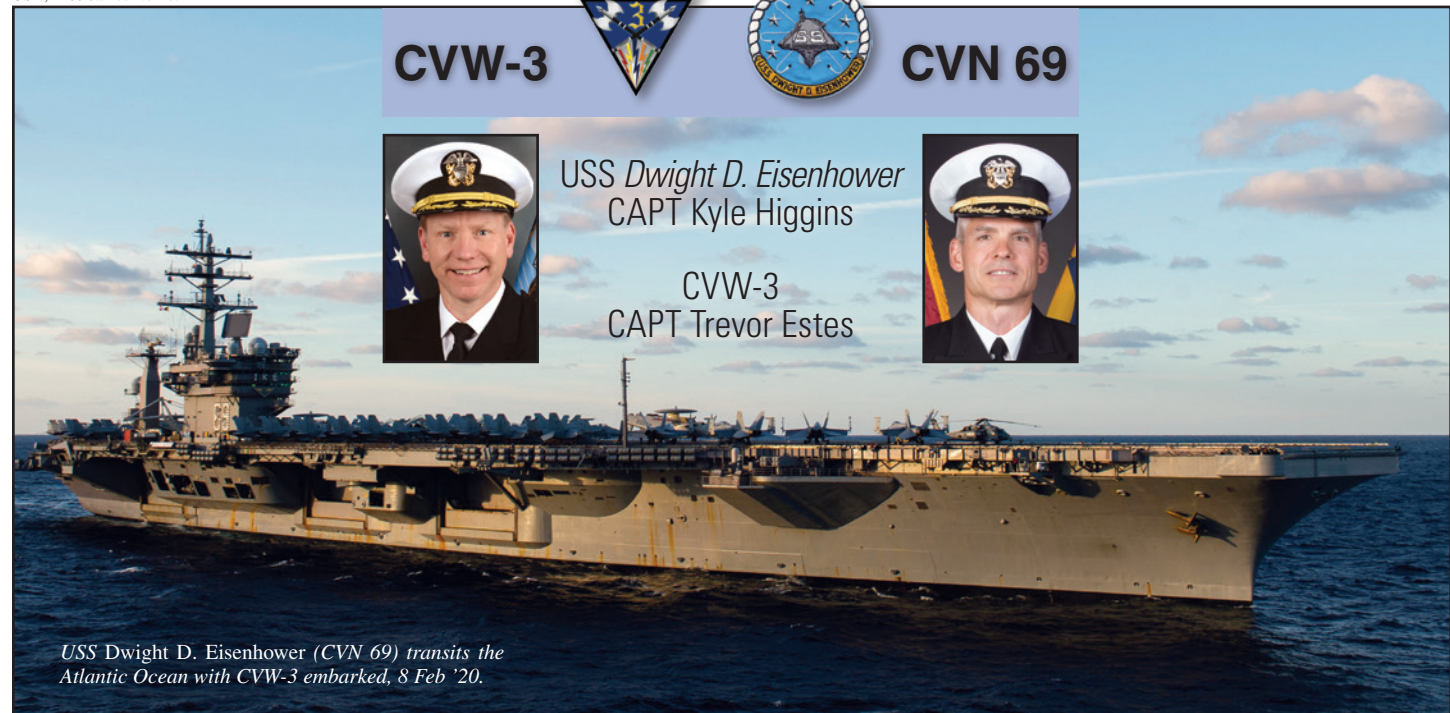
The *Gauntlets* continued to hone their tactical edge in 2020 with CQ in March and work ups beginning shortly thereafter.



USN



A VAQ-136 Gauntlets EA-18G Growler returns to NAS Whidbey Island over the cloud-shrouded Cascade Range in Washington.



USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69) transits the Atlantic Ocean with CVW-3 embarked, 8 Feb '20.

CVW-3

by LT Fred Darlington, USN

Team Battle Axe of Carrier Air Wing Three (CVW-3) launched into the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2020 with a renewed effort on honing skills in preparation for operations over the horizon. CVW-3 conducted Air Wing Fallon (AWF) from 25 October to 22 November, sharpening its mission set tools ranging from basic unit level training to multiple large-force strikes.

Following the completion of AWF, Team Battle Axe took its skills into the virtual realm with Fleet Synthetic Trainer, Joint. The exercise involved several scenarios of potential high-end fights, pitting a carrier strike group against a near-peer competitor, providing valuable training for Team Battle Axe as it looked forward to Composite Training Unit Exercise (COMPTUEX) and deployment.

MC2 Kaleb Sarten



The VFA-105 Gunslingers CAG bird leaves the deck of Eisenhower during operations in the Mediterranean Sea, 7 Mar '20.

of our Sailor maintainers and aircrew commitment to air-to-surface lethality, the *Gunslingers* completed all phases of AWF and earned two AIMC qualifications.

As the Optimized-Fleet Response Plan work-up phase progressed in preparation for deployment, the *Gunslingers* continued to excel in combat lethality, lead in material readiness and strive to remain the United States Navy's preeminent strike fighter squadron. Tonight ...WE RIDE!!

VAQ-130

The VAQ-130 *Zappers* gained invaluable experience and confidence for a very junior ready room by completing AWF during October and November 2019. These flights included syllabus changes to the missions for future air wing events. With deployment looming, the *Zappers* continued to conduct important training, as the air wing and squadron had not deployed in over two years. The *Zappers* returned to NAS Whidbey Island just in time for Thanksgiving to spend the last bits of quality time with family and friends as deployment quickly approached.

VAW-123

The *World-Famous Screwtops* of VAW-123 returned from a monthlong underway for TSTA on board *Eisenhower* in late September. The squadron completed 109 carrier landings in 61 sorties, aiding in both CVW-3 and the ship's proficiency.

After a quick turn-around, the *Screwtops* headed to Nevada for the month of November to participate in AWF, a vital multifaceted training exercise designed to evaluate the ability of CVW-3 to work together as a team in a simulated wartime environment. During their time in Fallon, the *Screwtops* flew 32 missions in support of the syllabus while building deployment readiness.

After successfully completing Commander, Naval Air Forces' Aviation Maintenance Inspection in December, VAW-123 spent the final few weeks of 2019 readying both their aircraft and families for an early-January departure for COMPTUEX and deployment on board *Eisenhower*.

HSM-74

Nearly three years since its last deployment, the *Swamp Foxes* of HSM-74 deployed in February on board *Ike* as part of *Carrier Strike Group Ten* (CSG-10). Before departing, the *Swamp Foxes* integrated with CVW-3 at AWF in October. During its time in Fallon, the squadron exercised its mission sets as an electronic support platform and in surface search coordination to display its value as an air asset.

HSM-74 highlighted the MH-60R helicopter as an integral force within the air wing during both large-force and unit level exercises. Through intense Joint planning, the squadrons of CVW-3 coordinated assets to conduct combat operations against replicas of real-world threats. Pilots



An E-2C Hawkeye assigned to the VAW-123 Screwtops makes its way into Eisenhower's hangar bay.

and aircrew of HSM-74 conducted live gun shoots at moving targets, became qualified in employing Advanced Precision Kill Weapons System rockets, conducted simulated *Hellfire* missile shoots, led surface coordination and reconnaissance and performed surface-to-air counter tactics against the most realistic simulations available.

AWF was an important part of HSM-74's work-up cycle in preparation for deployment. The integration of the air wing and coordination of the squadrons' assets during this monthlong exercise will prove crucial on deployment, and prepared the *Swamp Foxes* to provide a thorough combat picture, employ multiple weapons systems and defend against enemy action.

USN, MC3 Ashley M.C. Estrella



Sailors tow an E/A-18G Growler assigned to the VAQ-130 Zappers on the flight deck of Ike, 12 Feb '20.

USN



The HSM-74 Swamp Foxes operated this colorful MH-60R Seahawk during pre-deployment work ups at NAS Fallon last October.

USN, MC2 Elizabeth Cohen



LTs Nathan "NAGNANOD" Goodall, James "Piggy" Smith, Ryan "BITS" Paulson and Emily "FNG" Garcia fly VAQ-141 Shadowhawks EA-18Gs over Yashiro and Hashima Islands on the way home to MCAS Iwakuni.



USS Ronald Reagan
CAPT Pat Hannifin



CVW-5
CAPT Michael Rovenolt

EAGLES SHARPEN THEIR TALONS IN OSAN

by LT Evan "Bubbles" Davis, USN

In early November after returning from a fast-paced deployment on board USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76), there was an opportunity to keep the operational tempo up prior to the squadron departing for the holidays. The window was small, but a quick decision was made and coordination began with USAF units stationed at Osan AB, South Korea, to see if a detachment (det) was possible. It is not uncommon for this air base to host a sprinkling of Navy aircraft. The airfield's close proximity to MCAS Iwakuni, Japan, allows CVW-5 aircraft to fly in and out with minimal planning, making it a popular airway navigation destination.

But, the VFA-115 *Eagles* wanted more than just a weekend cross-country. They wanted to seize a training opportunity and bring a multitude of jets and personnel for an extended det. They envisioned establishing operations and tactically integrating with USAF squadrons there. With no pre-established framework on how to proceed, VFA-115 had to establish the guidelines from the ground up. Despite the challenges, the *Eagles* had a vision and forged ahead.

On 3 December, VFA-115 arrived at a vacant building on the flight line of Osan's airfield with 40 volunteers, six F/A-18E *Super Hornets* and a healthy amount of optimism. The initial tasking called for standing up maintenance and flight operations before the first scheduled sortie in 48 hours. This not only required the *Eagles* to prepare their own internal processes, but as guests on an Air Force base, it also necessitated integration with the host's policies, which seemed foreign to a Navy squadron. Fighting fires, both metaphorically and not, VFA-115 successfully completed its first sortie of the detachment 48 hours after arrival of the first jet.

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During the detachment the *Eagles* flew daily with their USAF compatriots from the 36th Fighter Squadron flying F-16 *Fighting Falcons* and the 25th Fighter Squadron's A-10 *Thunderbolt IIs*, also known as *Warthogs*. Due to the similarity of mission sets among these aircraft and the *Super Hornet*, the *Eagles* were able to coordinate and conduct a wide range of missions, encompassing many of the F/A-18E's capabilities. Air-to-surface missions were conducted with the 25th Fighter Squadron, joining the *Super Hornet* and *Warthog* together to provide on-time, on-target close air support for simulated troops on the ground. Air-to-air confrontations were simulated with the F-16s, the two fighters combining tactics in an attempt to gain and maintain air superiority over simulated enemy aircraft. Last but not least, *Super Hornets* were pitted against F-16s in dogfights, a one-versus-one close-range battle for air superiority. Each of these missions are tactically relevant to VFA-115's mission set, with sorties providing a unique opportunity for fighter integration.

The 36th Fighter Squadron was also generous enough to allow pilots of VFA-115 a back-seat ride during a tactical flight in an F-16, providing an inside look at how a pilot cut from the same cloth operates and employs a different fighter aircraft. After barely a week, a battle rhythm developed. Lessons were learned and kinks ironed out as the *Eagles* operated at the heightened level expected from VFA-115. But dets aren't permanent and on the one-week anniversary of the squadron's arrival in Osan, the *Eagles* flew back to Iwakuni. There are no guarantees that this opportunity will ever present itself again, but if there comes a time when VFA-115 is called upon to integrate with the USAF in a nonsimulated manner, the *Eagles* will be one step ahead. EFR!

VAQ-141 SHADOWHAWKS

by LT Elizabeth "Sputnik" Shaffer, USN

After the completion of deployment, the VAQ-141 *Shadowhawks* concluded 2019 by sharpening tactical skill sets. Through extensive collaboration with the VMFA-121 *Green Knights* flying F-35B *Lightning II* aircraft, the *Shadowhawks* enhanced Joint interoperability with fifth-generation warfighting assets. The partnership continues to develop electronic attack platform integration and lethality in complex real-world scenarios.

While forward deployed to Iwakuni, many of the *Shadowhawk* junior officers completed significant milestones in their tactical progression. Two completed their *Growler* Weapons and Tactics Program (GWTP) Level IV syllabus, and two completed their GWTP Level III qualifications. Additionally one pilot qualified as a section lead and another as a division lead. Congratulations to LTs Ryan "BITS" Paulson, Rob "Mary" Mawn, Eric "Ichibum" Young and Hunter "SLOPB" Beck on their accomplishments. With several candidates on the cusp of completing their GWTP Level III syllabus, the *Shadowhawks* continue to uphold a commitment to tactical excellence.

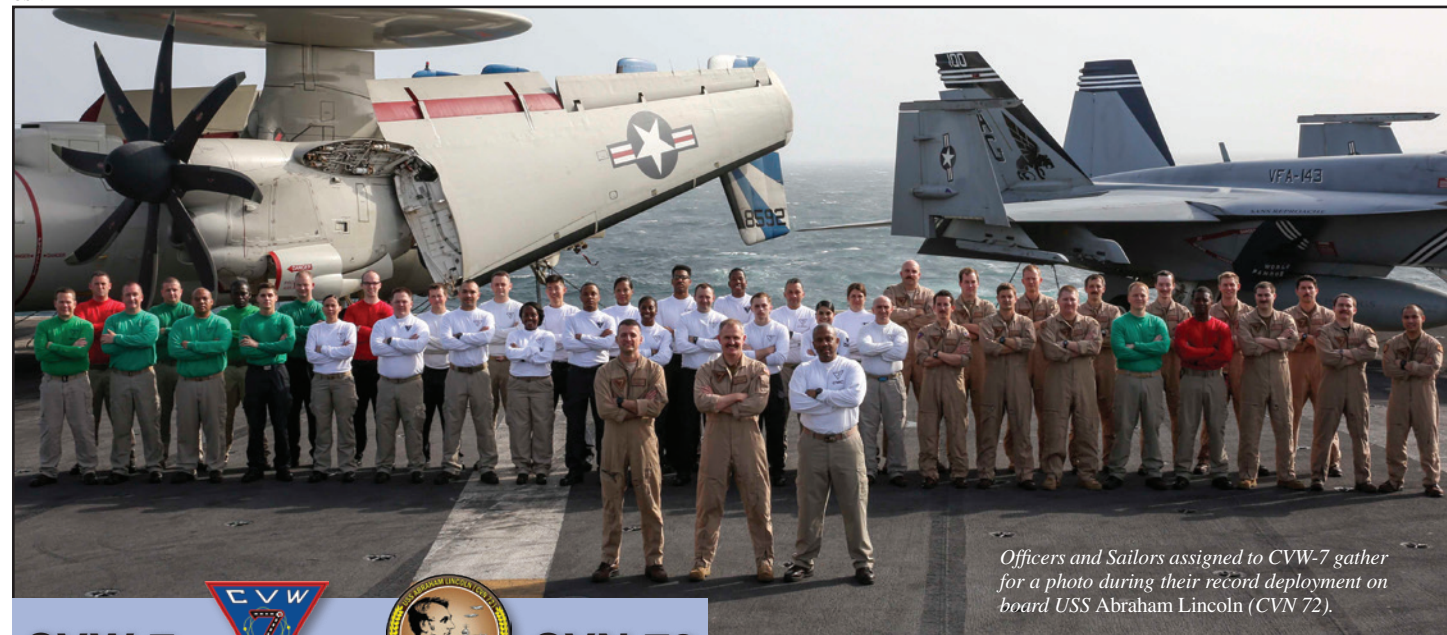
The *Shadowhawks* have a challenging few months ahead. While detached to Guam, the squadron will conduct advanced warfighting exercises alongside fellow CVW-5 squadrons to increase air wing lethality. Additionally our aircrew will participate in an AGM-88C High-speed Anti-Radiation Missile live fire. These challenges test our skills and enhance our expertise, allowing VAQ-141 to effectively support and conduct our national objectives in the skies over the Indo-Pacific region.



USN

Commanding Officer CDR Christopher Williams leads the VFA-115 *Eagles* on the flight line at Osan AB, South Korea, during Joint exercises last December.





Officers and Sailors assigned to CVW-7 gather for a photo during their record deployment on board USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72).

CVW-7  CVN 72 



USS Abraham Lincoln
CAPT Walter Slaughter



CVW-7
CAPT William Reed

CVW-7 RETURNS HOME FROM RECORD-SETTING DEPLOYMENT

by LCDR Joachim "Queen" Kuhn, USN

On 1 April 2019, the Freedom Fighters of CVW-7 embarked on board USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) and departed NavSta Norfolk for a scheduled seven-month around-the-world deployment, ending in Lincoln's new home port of San Diego. Everything about that plan changed in late April when U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) requested the presence of the Lincoln Strike Group to deter imminent threats against United States interests from Iran. Though the original plan had CVW-7 and Lincoln operating in the CENTCOM area of responsibility (AOR) for only a few weeks, they ultimately remained on station in the North Arabian Sea for nearly eight months.

CVW-7 spent the majority of the deployment conducting presence and deterrence operations and flights into Afghanistan in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel. During that time, tension continued to escalate with Iran's Houthi rebel attacks, Iranian mining of commercial vessels, the shutdown of an American RQ-4 Global Hawk drone, the Iranian seizure of a British tanker and missile strikes against the Aramco oil production facility. During these events, CVW-7 assets were ready and on station. Air wing helicopter crews took the images of Iranian personnel removing unexploded mines from tankers. The night of the British vessel's seizure in the Strait of Hormuz, CVW-7 jets flew overhead providing active presence and deterrence. Allies, partners and foes around the CENTCOM AOR felt the presence and stability provided by the Lincoln Strike Group.

Just before Christmas CVW-7 and Abraham Lincoln received the long awaited news that their relief was on station, and they were cleared to out-chop to Seventh Fleet and ultimately home. On the transit home, CVW-7 conducted operations in the South China Sea and in the vicinity of Taiwan, continuing to demonstrate the Navy's ability to operate freely wherever and whenever required. Abraham Lincoln then turned east for Hawaii, getting a well-deserved port visit prior to returning home. On 20 January, CVW-7 and Abraham Lincoln pulled into San Diego after a record-setting 296 days deployed.



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CVW-9  CVN 74 



USS John C. Stennis
CAPT Randall Peck



CVW-9
CAPT James Christie



A Sailor directs a VFA-41 Black Aces Super Hornet on board USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74) during operations in the South China Sea, 26 Feb '19.

VFA-41 BLACK ACES

by LCDR Joachim "Queen" Kuhn, USN

Although nearly a year has passed since Carrier Air Wing Nine's combat deployment ended, the VFA-41 World-Famous Black Aces have remained hard at work.

Shortly after returning from combat, the squadron went on detachment (det) to Portland, Ore., in August 2019. Over the City of Roses the Black Aces conducted high-level training with the USAF 123rd Fighter Squadron Redhawks. Following two weeks of intense training missions, the Black Aces returned to NAS Lemoore to begin planning their next det.


In October, the squadron bid farewell to Commanding Officer CDR Joshua "Noodle" Appezzato as CDR Nick "K-Mart" Hampton assumed the role of "Fast Eagle One" with new Executive Officer CDR Raymond "TT" Barr.

One month later VFA-41 again hit the road for a det to Tyndall AFB in Panama City, Fla., to participate in Checkered Flag, which builds aircrew tactical proficiency by conducting large-force events. During this exercise the squadron conducted dissimilar air combat training against F-22 Raptors, F-16 Fighting Falcons and F-15 Eagles and Strike Eagles. The squadron rapidly moved on to the Naval Weapons Systems Evaluation Program, employing three AIM-9M and one AIM-9X Sidewinders, all by first time shooter aircrew.

During this time, numerous members of the squadron accomplished major milestones. Four aircrew completed the strike fighter weapons and tactics (SFWT) Level IV syllabus, four completed the SFWT Level III syllabus and seven attained SFWT Level II qualifications.

As the Black Aces charge into 2020, they eagerly anticipate multiple dets with many Joint training opportunities, attending Hook '20 and celebrating the 70th anniversary of VFA-41. Under the leadership of Skipper K-Mart, the Black Aces continue to live up to their mission statement: "A team of warriors, dedicated to success in combat."






The Unseen Enemy

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Sailors preflight a VFA-154 Black Knights F/A-18F Super Hornet as aircrew walk toward the jet on the flight deck of USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71) in late 2019.

BLACK KNIGHTS ROCKET INTO DEPLOYMENT

by LT Mitch "PuPu SkiRT" Mathis, USN

The VFA-154 Black Knights have been at sea since mid-January when Carrier Air Wing Eleven (CVW-11) and USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71) departed San Diego bound for the Seventh Fleet area of responsibility (AOR).

The Black Knights' deployment followed a successful work-up cycle during fall 2019. The squadron completed Air Wing Fallon (AWF) in September, participating in multiple dynamic training events within the AWF syllabus, and qualifying LTs Mark "Boom Boom" Van Orden, Travis "SHLiB" Page, LCDRs Clifton "Marv" Helterbran and Christopher "Dump Truck" Nicolet as rescue mission commanders. Additionally LCDRs Patrick "Judas" Lakusta and Taylor "Casino" Rives earned their air interdiction mission commander qualifications during the squadron's month in Fallon.

VFA-154's work-up cycle culminated with four weeks embarked on board Roosevelt for Composite Training Unit Exercise (COMPTUEX). The Black Knights, along with the entire CVW-11 team, integrated with Carrier Strike Group Nine (CSG-9) as the ship and air wing team prepared to challenge near-peer adversaries. Some highlights during the Black Knights' successful COMPTUEX included LTs Steve "Scuba" Scoville, Alex "LoAF" Donaldson and Robert "Harambe" Lyons completing their strike fighter weapons and tactics (SFWT) Level III syllabus, making them combat section leads.

After leaving San Diego, VFA-154 completed a week of flight operations in the vicinity of the Hawaiian Islands, making final preparations before entering the Seventh Fleet AOR. During this week of flight operations, LT Sam "BITS" Smith also completed his SFWT Level IV syllabus. As we go forward, the Black Knights stand ready to do our nation's bidding!

The Black Knights' hard work on deployment was punctuated by a weekend port call in Guam. The squadron was able to decompress by enjoying Guam's beautiful white sandy beaches and weather, a plethora of Morale, Welfare and Recreation tours and the local cuisine. All had a good time, as everyone recharged for another few weeks at sea! The Black Knights will continue to train hard so that, when called, we conduct decisive combat operations to defeat any enemy. BKR!

VFA-31 TOMCATTERS

by LT Alex "Banana Hands" Carlson, USN

The Tomcatters wrapped up 2019 with COMPTUEX, the culminating exercise in a long but productive work-up cycle. Operating off San Diego with Roosevelt and CVW-11, Felix pilots flew 421 sorties and more than 750 flight hours. Aircrew gained valuable training and experience in both the air-to-air and air-to-surface environments during the exercise. Thanks to the tireless efforts of the squadron's maintenance and ordnance personnel, pilots were able to train to employ numerous types of weapons including general-purpose bombs, Joint Direct Attack Munitions, AGM-154A Joint Standoff Weapons and a live AGM-65E Laser Maverick. Upon completion of the exercise, VFA-31 and CVW-11 showed they were more than ready for the upcoming 2020 deployment.

After completing COMPTUEX, Team Felix returned to Oceana where the squadron enjoyed a break. The Tomcatters completed SFWT and field carrier landing practice (FCLP) flights in the final weeks before returning to San Diego to join the rest of CSG-9. Due to the hard work put in by everyone in the squadron during the work-up cycle, the command was ready to roll for the 2020 Western Pacific (WESTPAC) deployment and set sail in January.

USN, MC3 Zachary Wheeler



A VFA-31 Tomcatters F/A-18E Super Hornet launches from Roosevelt underway in the Indo-Pacific region, 5 Feb '20.

Since getting underway, VFA-31 and CVW-11 have conducted multiple flights in the Hawaii and Guam operating areas while on their way to join Seventh Fleet. During this time, the air wing operated in true blue water conditions, with the nearest airfield often more than 800 nautical miles away. These operations highlight the unique capabilities of Naval Aviation, demonstrating our ability to conduct flight operations anywhere in the world at any time. After an enjoyable port call in Guam, Felix and the rest of the team continued to steam west, setting an example of excellence while standing by to defend the United States on the high seas at a moment's notice. Felix Rules!

VAW-115 LIBERTY BELLS

by LT Alex Bledsoe, USN

With the recent departure of Theodore Roosevelt, the Liberty Bells have made squadron history, embarking on their first continental United States-based deployment since the move from NAF Atsugi, Japan, to NBVC Point Mugu, Calif., in 2017. It was a busy quarter at sea as we conducted a COMPTUEX and then geared up for a sustained WESTPAC while still managing to spend time with friends and family during the holidays.

COMPTUEX provided the Liberty Bells an opportunity to refine their skills in command and control (C2) while CVW-11 and CSG-9 honed their skills of force projection. During its four-week underway period, the squadron vigorously practiced tactics in missions like defensive counter-air, maritime air control, war at sea and surface surveillance coordination. The missions were diverse and required in-depth coordination, resulting in numerous training opportunities. While the aircrew worked diligently airborne, coordinating and controlling, and on deck in mission planning and briefing, the Liberty Bells' maintenance team worked tirelessly to ensure aircraft were up and ready. COMPTUEX was a success both for the Liberty Bells and the strike group, which earned Blue-Water Certification. Additionally the Bells were proud to see Commanding Officer CDR Stephen Yenias earn a spot in CVW-11's Top 11 for the preceding period.



All hands on deck for a VAW-115 Liberty Bells photo call on board CVN 71 in February.

After a safe and successful COMPTUEX, the squadron returned ashore to its new hangar in Point Mugu for the holidays. Squadronmembers spent some welcome time with friends and family while they continued to groom their aircraft and shops in preparation for the upcoming WESTPAC deployment. With the runway under construction at Point Mugu, the Liberty Bells got creative and conducted FCLP on a shortened runway. Needless to say they made it work. On Family Day spouses and friends came out to the LSO shack and watched their pilots practice in preparation for carrier qualification.

The start of the New Year marked a new dawn for the Liberty Bells. In an emotional goodbye, family and friends gathered on the beach and watched the Hawkeyes depart Point Mugu. The Bells will continue to dedicate their efforts to C2 on deployment, while also making a few port calls aimed at cultivating friendly relations in the regions they visit. They are now part of the "tip of the spear," representing the nation and its interests as they project force in the region, standing the watch in any theater, on any continent, in any part of the world.



Erin Bledsoe



Family and friends of VAW-115 watch and wave goodbye to loved ones as squadron E-2C Hawkeyes depart NBVC Point Mugu for deployment in January.

USN



CAG-17 CAPT Robert E. Loughran taxis an F/A-18F on board USS Nimitz (CVN 68) with RDML Yvette M. Davids in the rear cockpit, 5 Feb '20. Loughran had just completed his 1,199th carrier landing.

CVW-17  CVN 68 



USS Nimitz
CAPT Maximilian Clark



CVW-17
CAPT Robert Loughran

CAG-17 COMPLETES 1,200th ARRESTED LANDING

by LT Elizabeth "Frau" Fluke, USN

The commander of CVW-17 completed his 1,200th career arrested landing on 5 February on the flight deck of USS Nimitz (CVN 68) during the air wing's recent underway for group sail (GRUSAIL).

CAPT Robert E. Loughran, a Naval Aviator, landed an F/A-18F Super Hornet assigned to the VFA-22 Fighting Redcocks while underway with Nimitz off Southern California. While a pilot typically commemorates his 1,000th trap, this recent occasion stands out and apart from most.

Scheduled for both day and night sorties, CAPT Loughran had the privilege earlier in the day to fly Commander, Carrier Strike Group Eleven RDML Yvette M. Davids in the rear cockpit. While not her first ride in an F/A-18F, this was her first opportunity to experience a catapult shot and arrested landing in the aircraft. Typically during wintertime the waters off Southern California can provide for some low cloud cover and rough seas. Just the opposite existed on 5 February allowing for a tower flyby and uneventful 1,199th recovery for CAPT Loughran and first for RDML Davids.

Later that day in preparation for the 1,200th arrested landing, resident CVW-17 LSO LCDR Justin Grofik allowed a special guest on the platform to "wave" CAPT Loughran aboard. RDML Davids answered "Roger Ball, 1200" to Loughran's call over the radio as he maintained glideslope and successfully arrested for an okay pass, safely aboard for the 1,200th time.

RAMPING UP

January can be a weird month. While never longer than 31 days, it tends to drag on with February a distant dream. For CVW-17 however, this January flew by. We blinked and found ourselves staring down Air Wing Fallon (AWF) wondering where all the blank space on the calendar went.

The air wing is knocking out work ups left and right with basic phase beginning and ending late last year. As part of that evolution we got the band back together with new faces in the form of the VMFA-323 Death Rattlers, our final Marine Corps F/A-18C Hornet squadron, with Tailored Ship's Training Availability (TSTA) in November on board Nimitz. While underway, a no-fly day provided a break from a busy training schedule to celebrate Thanksgiving with a feast provided by the Nimitz team. Sneaking some time in at home with our families over the winter holidays, our attention quickly turned to the end of January and GRUSAIL. The evolution allowed the ships within the strike group to train together and prepare for the next and more challenging phase of predeployment work ups.

AWF is sounding its horn and we are heeding the call to mecca. A level of uncertainty exists as this AWF has a slightly different flavor and feel; CVW-17 will be the first air wing to tackle the new syllabus as the course continues to evolve in the face of the ever-changing threat. Wish us luck and send beer tokens.

VFA-137 KESTRELS

by LT Ben "Silver Spoon" Piazza, USN

The year 2019 brought change for the VFA-137 Kestrels. On 25 April CDR Louis "Abba" Catalina IV relieved CDR Jayson "PLATO" Eurick as commanding officer, which was only the start of an exciting transitional period. After 26 years as part of CVW-2's Team Broadsword, the Kestrels joined Team Quicksand as part of CVW-17 and immediately began an intense year of work ups in preparation for an upcoming deployment.

The journey began by traveling to Tyndall AFB, Fla., to take part in a live missile shoot with the AIM-120 Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missile (AMRAAM) and AIM-9 Sidewinder variants. The squadron returned home during the summer to begin the challenging task of accepting and transferring 25 aircraft as it transitioned from Block I, Lot

25 APG-73 aircraft to Block II, Lot 36 APG-79s, all while continuing the Strike Fighter Advanced Readiness Program (SFARP) work-up syllabus. Late summer saw the Kestrels take their new jets straight into air-to-air SFARP at NAS Key West, followed by a brief return home. Then it was off to Fallon for air-to-surface SFARP. While there they joined with the strike group during the Integrated Air Defense System course, participating in virtual training exercises in defense of Carrier Strike Group Eleven.

The end of the year saw the Kestrels in a familiar environment — underway on board Nimitz as part of the TSTA exercise. While on board, the squadron integrated with the air wing and ship's crew, building the foundations of the relationships that will carry VFA-137 and Team Quicksand into 2020 and beyond. The Kestrels continue to execute at high tactical levels as they prep for the upcoming AWF detachment, Composite Training Unit Exercise (COMPTUEX) and finally, deployment.

VAQ-139 COUGARS

by LT Sean T. Ryan, USN

As the days grew shorter and the weather turned cold and gray, the men and women of VAQ-139 traveled south to San Diego for fairer seas and clearer skies. In mid-November, the Cougars experienced 25 days of carrier operations in support of TSTA on board Nimitz. The detachment (det) started with carrier qualification during which all aircrew proved capable of landing safely on board the ship. VAQ-139 then conducted three successful weeks of cyclic operations, mirroring what will be experienced in the upcoming COMPTUEX. Working off the coast of California, the squadron conducted training flights exploring various phases of EA-18G Growler mission sets. When asked about his experience, LT Brendan "Ana" Walsh replied, "TSTA provided VAQ-139 with a great opportunity to integrate with CVW-17 and the Nimitz. It also allowed junior aircrew like me to experience cyclic ops and fast-paced shipboard operations for the first time."

Following the det, the Cougars returned to NAS Whidbey Island in time for the holiday season. A short leave period allowed squadronmembers time with family and friends. This small respite was a great reward for all the hard work that had been accomplished in the prior month.



VFA-137 Kestrels personnel pose with a squadron Rhino at NAS Lemoore in February.

Two weeks after the New Year, VAQ-139 was back at sea. The Cougars participated in GRUSAIL, an opportunity for the air wing to work with crucial components of the carrier strike group. The squadron continued to work on competency and safe practices. The pinnacle of this training evolution occurred with a missile shoot, in which two aircraft employed High-speed Anti-Radiation Missiles (HARM) and another fired an AMRAAM. This moment was a memorable opportunity for all Sailors and aircrew involved. LT Christopher "DNGE" Arndt, a participant in the HARM shoot, said, "Employing HARM provided an invaluable training experience."

With a busy winter in the rearview mirror, the Cougars are moving forward into an even busier spring. With AWF just around the corner and COMPTUEX in the near future, the hard work is far from over. As the intensity of training increases, so will the steadfastness of all those privileged enough to call themselves Cougars.

Si vis pacem para bellum. If you want peace, prepare for war.



An EA-18G Growler assigned to the VAQ-139 Cougars over the majestic mountains of Washington in January.



EXPEDITIONARY

VAQ-132 SCORPIONS RETURN FROM WESTPAC

The VAQ-132 *Scorpions* conducted a late 2019 deployment to the Western Pacific area of responsibility. The squadron operated from five Indo-Pacific Command locations, using Misawa AB, Japan, as home base.

During the deployment the *Scorpions* achieved many firsts for the EA-18G *Growler* community. One of the unique roles the squadron filled while deployed was standing defensive counter air alert in support of *Commander, Task Force 70/Commander, Carrier Strike Group Five*. The *Scorps* also conducted multiple Joint and Coalition exercises, working closely with several USAF and Allied squadrons.

Returning to NAS Whidbey Island, Wash., in late October 2019, the squadron was able to celebrate the accomplishments resulting from its hard work during deployment by sharing stories with loved ones and members of the community.

On 27 February the squadron held a change-of-command ceremony on board Whidbey Island. During the ceremony CDR Kerry P. Hicks relieved CDR Douglas M. White as commanding officer. This is an extremely rare instance of a father and son commanding the same squadron. CAPT Gary B. Hicks, USN(Ret), led the *Scorpions* from November 1994 to January 1996. Col Kenneth S. Callicutt, USAF(Ret) served as guest speaker. CDR Hicks had reported to VAQ-132 as the executive officer in December 2018.


In his remarks upon taking command CDR Hicks said, "I am incredibly humbled to lead this team of fine individuals over the next year and a half. Whatever comes our way we will succeed in true *Scorp* fashion — STING STING!"

VAQ-132 Scorpions command photo at Misawa AB, Japan, 27 Sep '19.

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EXPEDITIONARY

STAR WARRIORS AT NELLIS

by CDR Pete Scheu, USN

In November the VAQ-209 *Star Warriors* headed south to Nellis AFB to conduct Joint large-force employment (LFE) training with the USAF Weapons School in preparation for the squadron's rapidly approaching operational deployment. For two weeks *Team Vader* worked alongside F-35A *Lightning IIs* of the 6th Weapons Squadron (WPS), F-15C *Eagles* from 433rd WPS, F-16C *Vipers* of the 16th WPS and the F-15E *Strike Eagles* assigned to the 17th WPS, conducting deep-strike suppression of enemy air defense missions in support of the fourth and fifth-generation fighters honing their combat readiness. The Nevada Test and Training Range provided a complex Integrated Air Defense Systems (IADS) environment superior to what is available anywhere else in the country and gave the *Star Warriors* numerous opportunities to fly as part of a lethal Joint Forces component fighting in highly contested airspace representative of our most advanced adversaries.

Joint LFE training involves significant mission planning and debriefing activities with its complex nature and multiservice intricacies. By integrating with the USAF F-35A, F-16C, F-15C and F-15E weapons school students, the *Star Warriors* were able to expand USAF aircrew knowledge of Navy airborne electronic attack capabilities and showcase the significant IADS degradation that the EA-18G *Growler* brings to the fight. Additionally students capitalized on the increased situational awareness that *Growler* combat systems can provide to Joint platforms. Through mission planning, briefing, execution and debriefing, all aircrew worked together to solve complex tactical problems representative of today's combat scenarios, while also learning how to rapidly adapt and overcome a capable adversary armed with a lethal and advanced IADS. Once again Joint LFE proved that Navy airborne electronic attack is in high demand for the Joint Forces due to the increased survivability and mission effectiveness that it delivers when fully integrated. The experience that this Joint exercise provided to both USAF Weapons School students and *Vader* aircrew was unmatched across Department of Defense training.

The *Star Warriors* flew an unprecedented 68 sorties over 117 hours, achieving 484 training and readiness requirement tasks during the 25 LFE events. Two new *Growler* Weapons and Tactics (GWPT) Level III Mission Commander and Combat Lead qualifications were earned during this detachment and designated by the Electronic Attack Weapons School.

With the diversity of Selected Reservist (SelRes) and full time support operator backgrounds in the *Star Warrior* ready room (which includes former VFA, VAQ and VAW aircrew), the combat lethality of *Team*

Vader is unmatched on the flight line. These advanced qualifications include significant numbers of GWPT Level IV and Level III aircrew, as well as former strike fighter tactics instructor Level IV and Level III aircrew, which makes the ready room available to deploy on short notice with depth of operator experience.

Additionally several of the part-time SelRes aircrew attached to VAQ-209 work in related jobs in the civilian sector, including Naval Air Systems Command, Naval Air Warfare Centers (Aircraft Division and Weapons Division) and our industry partners. These Reservists bring additional depth of knowledge in future platforms, weapons systems, training devices and material including F/A-18 Block III and EA-18G Block II, next generation jammer, AGM-88E Advanced Anti-Radiation Guided Missile programs and other Joint and carrier-based combat capabilities. This diversity adds significant depth across the total Navy force, often decreasing program development timelines while increasing the speed to fleet opportunities. This ultimately helps field more lethal combat capabilities for the warfighter. Without question, the *Vader* ready room brings significant tactical options to any combatant commander.

As standard, this detachment was run entirely by part-time SelRes, illustrating the flexibility that Reserve aircrew bring to the total force. Detachment Assistant Officer-in-Charge LT Alex McKinney commented, "Despite past manning challenges and recent periodic aircraft maintenance schedules, the squadron remained extremely flexible and was able to overcome obstacles. Flexibility is a key enabler to lethality on the battlefield, and because of this, we completed all of our training objectives."

Once again, the *Star Warrior* maintenance professionals performed at a superior level, accomplishing a 100 percent sortie completion rate across the detachment. Additionally on the last day of Joint LFEs, the *Star Warriors* pushed themselves to the limit and conducted combat-like surge operations, launching five EA-18Gs in support of concurrent multiple deep-strike events, recovering these jets, then sending them back into the air to fight again during a reduced turn-around cycle. After two weeks of heavy operations *Vader* maintenance rose to the challenge and provided fully mission capable aircraft for every event. The *Star Warriors* showcased their ability to deliver on-call lethality and surge availability due to the superior capabilities that high levels of experience and deep professional knowledge bring with a Reserve squadron.

The *Star Warriors* thank the professionals at the Nellis AFB Medical Center and Dental Clinic, who went out of their way to support VAQ-209's medical and dental readiness in preparation for our upcoming deployment and who were key enablers to deploying combat capability and delivering forward presence. *Team Vader* would like to thank the USAF Weapons School and the VX-9 *Vampires* for their outstanding support in making this Joint LFE a great success. As the Department of Defense's only strategic reserve Electronic Attack Squadron, *Team Vader* stands ready to deploy and "Fight Tonight!"

USN, CDR Pete Scheu



A VAQ-209 Star Warriors EA-18G Growler cruises over the Nevada desert during winter exercises at Nellis AFB.



Smoke belches from one of Panchito's radial piston engines during startup at USNTPS.

EXPEDITIONARY

THE NAVY AND PANCHITO by Mark Aldrich

The North American B-25 Mitchell was certainly one of the most famous warplanes of World War II. First flown in 1939, the airplane was quickly ordered into production by the Army Air Forces. Nearly 10,000 were built and the type served with more than two dozen air forces.

In April 1942, 16 Army B-25s led by Lt Col Jimmy Doolittle launched from USS *Hornet* (CV 8) for an epic 800-mile flight to raid Japan. This was the Navy's first significant experience with the *Mitchell* and led to a sporadic 78-year association. The Navy received the first of more than 700 examples of the airplane, designated PBJ *Mitchells*, early in 1943 and ultimately operated five distinct models with the last retired in 1948.

For the past five years the Navy has been renewing its acquaintance with the old warbird. For many years the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School (USNTPS) has contracted with vintage aircraft owners to broaden the experience of its student aviators and engineers as part of their Qualitative Evaluation program. Among the types used in the past are the SNJ *Texan* and Hawker *Sea Fury*. Today's choice is a 75-year-old B-25 named *Panchito*. Owned and flown by Larry Kelley, executive director of the Delaware Aviation Museum, *Panchito* visits USNTPS twice a year. This allows students the opportunity to come to grips with the flying characteristics of a state-of-the-art machine from a bygone era, one without boosted controls, a glass cockpit, nose-wheel steering and computers. The airplane requires considerable physical strength to operate and is usually completely unlike anything the students have flown before. USNTPS teaches adaptability as part of its curriculum,



Larry Kelley, co-founder of the Delaware Aviation Museum, with his World War II-era B-25 Mitchell bomber Panchito at the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School.

and a full flight envelope in *Panchito* is a challenge for today's aviators. But they are reminded that, for this moment, they are following in the footsteps of thousands who came before, and the experience is immensely rewarding. As LtCol Rory "Pikey" Feely, USMC, commanding officer of USNTPS, said during a recent interview: "*Panchito* embodies life in aviation—the bravery, the engineering, the

history, the passion and the love of flying. It is a difficult plane to fly, and we would never build it now. But it is still a joy to fly and teaches us many things about ourselves and our nation's pioneering foothold on aviation. People admire *Panchito* on the ground with her sleek and shiny polished exterior, but she really comes to life when she's soaring, and that is why pilots love her!"



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The A-7 Corsair II Association's mission is to document the history of the A-7 airplane and those who flew and maintained it, to be a repository and guardian of the extensive Corsair II legacy, and to facilitate contact among former members of the A-7 community. As a non-profit corporation, our goals are to contribute to select philanthropic organizations that support our mission, and to assist museums regarding the display and history of the A-7 airplane. A major focus is to provide funds and expertise toward encouraging the education of America's youth in science, mathematics, critical thinking, and how the A-7 played a part in the history of aviation.



MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the A-7 Corsair II Association is open to all former officer and enlisted personnel who, at any time, served a tour of duty in any squadron that flew the A-7, either within the U.S. or abroad, or has flown an A-7 as pilot in command. Membership is also available to those persons who served in the capacity of providing direct support to a squadron (e.g. civilian providing services to an A-7 squadron while at home or deployed).

Go to www.corsair2.us to learn more, and to become a member.

PLEASE VISIT OUR BOOTH AT HOOK!



IN REVIEW

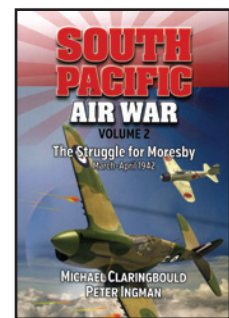
South Pacific Air War, Volume 1, The Fall of Rabaul December 1941–March 1942; Michael Claringbould and Peter Ingman; Avonmore Books, South Australia, 2017; softcover, 252 pages, illustrated, appendices and index. \$44.95

South Pacific Air War, Volume 2, The Struggle for Moresby, March–April 1942; Michael Claringbould and Peter Ingman; Avonmore Books, South Australia, 2018; softcover, 232 pages, illustrated, appendices and index. \$44.95

South Pacific Air War, Volume 3, Coral Sea and Aftermath, May–June 1942; Michael Claringbould and Peter Ingman; Avonmore Books, South Australia, 2019; softcover, 248 pages, illustrated, appendices and index. \$46.95

These superb books form a trilogy that detail aerial warfare in the South Pacific during the critical first six months of World War II from the Pearl Harbor attack through the Battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942. The Australian authors are published historians and illustrators who have written much about the Japanese and Allied forces during the Pacific war.

The initial book in the series chronicles the first three months in the South Pacific air war, 8 December 1941 to 9 March 1942. During this period the Japanese captured the key base of Rabaul on New Britain with the support of their fleet carriers. USS *Lexington* (CV 2) and *Yorktown* (CV 5) and their escorts entered the South Pacific in early February to assist Australian and New Zealand forces in stopping Japanese advances toward Port Moresby, New Guinea, and other islands along the lines of communication between Pearl Harbor and Australia. *Lexington's* VF-3 scored a lopsided victory over Japanese bombers attacking the carrier on 20 February, with LT Edward H. "Butch" O'Hare receiving the Medal of Honor for his actions. On 8 March the Japanese landed at Lae and Salamaua, capturing airfields on New Guinea and setting the stage for the race to Port Moresby across the Owen Stanley Mountains.



Volume two begins with the 10 March *Lexington* and *Yorktown* carrier strike on the Japanese invasion force off Lae and Salamaua, which delayed the invasion of Port Moresby and Tulagi in the Solomon Islands. It details the movements and actions of respective Allied air forces. Japanese *Zeros* began arriving at Lae in early March and joined Rabaul-based bombers striking airfields at Port Moresby. By mid-March a Royal Australian Air Force P-40 *Kittyhawk* squadron arrived at Port Moresby to defend the airfields, supported by a growing collection of U.S. Army Air Forces aircraft that began arriving in Australia as early as January. These included B-17 *Flying Fortresses*, A-24 *Banshees*, P-39 *Aircobras*, A-20 *Havocs*, B-25 *Mitchells* and B-26 *Marauders*. The latter pair of aircraft made their combat debuts in New Guinea and performed well against the *Zeros*. Daily combat exhausted pilots and aircraft, with both sides facing limited resources, long supply lines, unpredictable and dangerous weather and the unfriendly environment of flying over the jungle, mountains and ocean.

The third book in the series continues with the Japanese planning and operations to seize Port Moresby and Tulagi. The resulting battle pitting Japanese and U.S. naval forces in the first carrier versus carrier engagement in history, the Battle of the Coral Sea on 7–8 May 1942, is covered well by the authors.

With their thorough research of Allied accounts and Japanese records, the authors have produced a well-written and highly readable trilogy. Collectively the books provide readers with comprehensive and detailed accounts of daily events that occurred on both sides in the air and at sea during the opening months of WW II. For example, Japanese and Allied raids are covered in such detail that readers usually know who was flying, the aircraft serial numbers, tactics used in an action and how many bullets each side expended in the engagements.

The book's superb text is complemented by a wonderful selection of photographs, most of which have not been seen before by this reviewer. In addition color digital 3D drawings, maps and tables are all excellently reproduced on quality paper. Each book has multiple appendices containing added information. Two cover Allied and Japanese aircraft losses and fatalities down to the type aircraft, serial number and unit with comments on each. Another assembles cumulative aircraft losses and fatalities by aircraft type. The other appendices provide multiple pages of color three-view drawings with comments and side profiles of the planes that participated in the actions detailed in the text.

I cannot say enough about these three books. American authors have not adequately covered the war in the South Pacific, especially in the early months of WW II. The average reader knows little about the daily struggle in this area. Yet these events led to the pivotal battles at Midway and Guadalcanal, two turning points in the war to defeat Japan. Aviation historians and modelers will enjoy these books because of the wide variety and type aircraft involved and the informative details provided.

CDR Doug Siegfried, USN(Ret)



Vigilante! A Pilot's Story; 1,200 Hours Flying the Ultimate U.S. Navy Reconnaissance Aircraft; CDR Robert R. "Boom" Powell, USN(Ret); Specialty Press, Forest Lake, Minn., 2019; softcover, 192 pages, illustrated. \$42.95

"Boom" Powell is certainly no stranger to readers of *The Hook*, and his new book covering the career of the North American A-5 *Vigilante* is a welcome addition to the library this year. Raconteur Boom Powell logged more than 1,200 hours in the aircraft, including green ink time over Vietnam. He's uniquely qualified to tell the *Vigilante's* remarkable and heroic story.

With its supple lines the *Vigi* is frequently described as the most beautiful jet the Navy ever flew, yet its high performance came with a resulting elevated mishap rate, right up there with the F-8 *Crusader*. Nonetheless, the *Vigilante* was the stuff of legends, being the fastest carrier jet the service has ever owned in its normal combat configuration and routinely outrunning its F-4 *Phantom II* escorts over Indochina.

Published by Specialty Press, this effort includes a wealth of information in 190 pages from the type's development as a nuclear attack aircraft, through its much longer use as a remarkably capable photoreconnaissance platform.

The book features a nice mix of developmental, technical and operational details with numerous sidebars describing things like launch and recovery, the replacement air groups, LSOs, camouflage experiments and other historical aspects that expand the aircraft's colorful persona. Both pilots and Naval Fight Officers, known as reconnaissance attack navigators in the *Vigi's* heyday, are featured and include many familiar A-5 fliers like "Rotten Ralph" Feeback, "Fox" Fallon, Frank Pendergast and "Pirate" Pirote. All three naval air stations that the small, nomadic



Vigi community called home, Sanford, Fla., Albany, Ga., and Key West, are also covered.

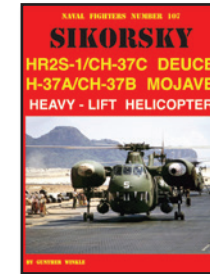
Photographs are well presented with excellent captions providing a wealth of additional information.

You can tell this was a labor of love for Boom Powell. It's highly recommended for anyone interested in Navy jets and those during the Vietnam War in particular.

LCDR Rick Morgan, USN(Ret)

Naval Fighters Number 107, Sikorsky HR2S-1/CH-37C Deuce and H-37A/CH-37B Mojave Heavy-Lift Helicopter; Gunter Winkle; Ginter Publishing, Simi Valley Calif., 2018; softcover, 137 pages, illustrated. \$44.95

Some aircraft have an unforgettable profile and the Sikorsky HR2S/CH-37 *Mojave* series of helicopters is one of those unforgettable machines. I remember them transiting the southern edge of the Rocky Mountains in El Paso, Texas, while flying west, especially the distinctive sound of the R-2800 engines and the "eyes" on the engine pods as they flew toward me. In the years since I have looked for references on that unique helicopter without much success until now. Author Gunther Winkle shares a passion for the HR2S/CH-37 that has resulted in a wonderful volume in the continuing *Naval Fighters* series. Winkle has amassed a great deal of material and rare photography for the creation of this valuable reference on an overlooked helicopter.



For those interested in the technical details of the helicopter, the volume provides drawings, manual sections and detailed interior and exterior photographs. The volume is lavishly illustrated with a series of images, many in color, of the HR2S/CH-37 during its development and service.

The volume is divided into four major sections. The first 50 pages discuss Gen Roy Geiger, USMC, and his need for a heavy lift helicopter to change the way Marines operated on the battlefield. It was interesting to read that the design was limited to radial engines due to the diversion of jet engines for aircraft production. The development of the Model 56 (the Sikorsky designation for the HR2S/CH-37) and some descriptions of the design are also included.

The next section discusses the HR2S entry into USMC service, nicely interwoven with personal stories. It also documents CH-37 service in the U.S. Army complemented by numerous illustrations showing how the Army used the helicopter.

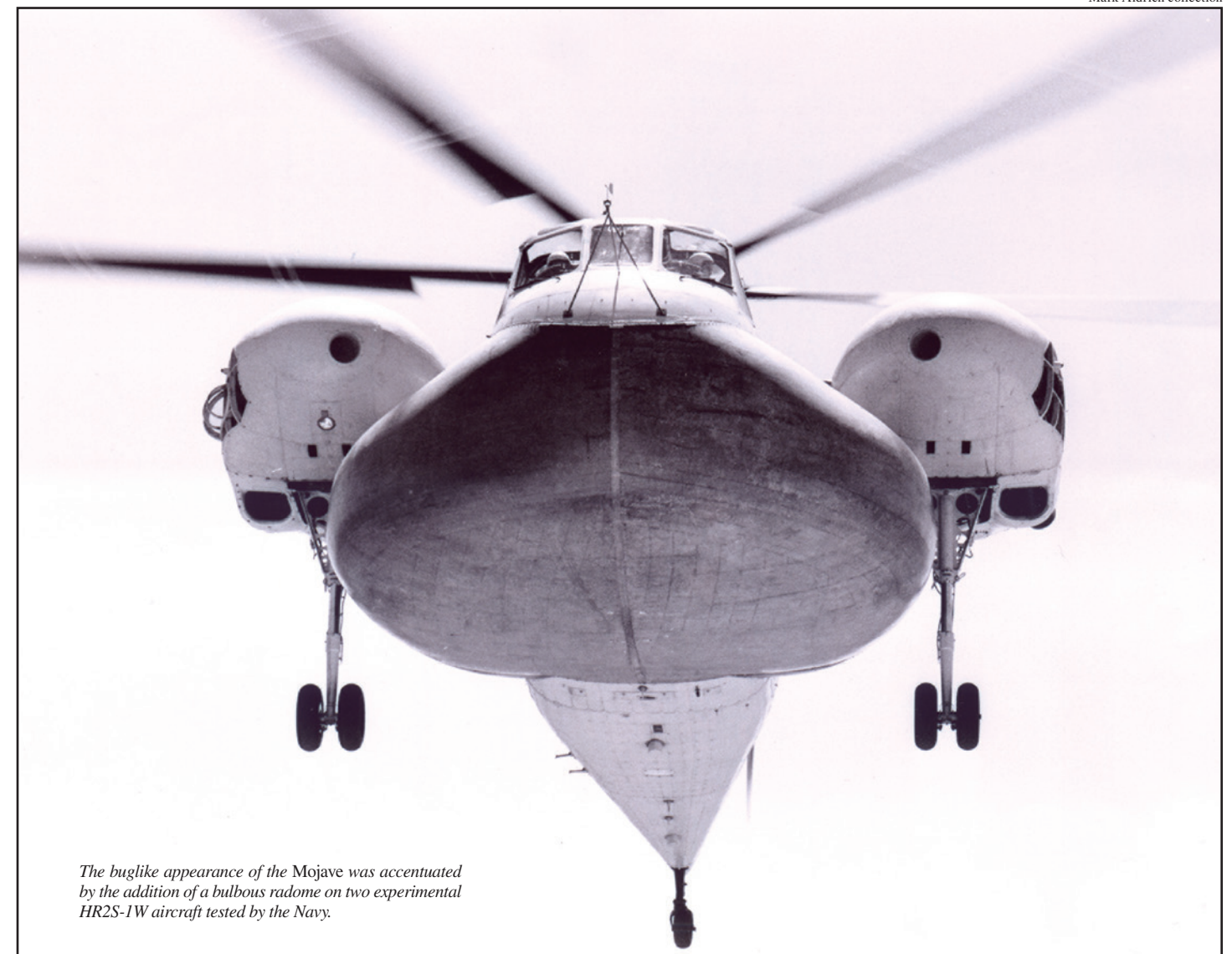
The subsequent chapter highlights the type's service in the Vietnam War with both services. Outstanding color photos illustrate the various tasks accomplished by the units flying the *Mojave*.

The book finishes with the so-called *Guppy*, a version featuring a twin-rotor tail, civilian usage, survivors and the various scale models of the aircraft.

This addition to the *Naval Fighters* series paints a great picture of the predecessor to the CH-53 series that has carried on the Sikorsky legacy of heavy lift helicopters. If you have any interest in helicopters, their development and usage, this book is highly recommended for inclusion in your aviation library.

Bill Spidle

Mark Aldrich collection



The buglike appearance of the Mojave was accentuated by the addition of a bulbous radome on two experimental HR2S-1W aircraft tested by the Navy.



RESPOT

Mail Call

A Prime Reason to Attend Tailhook Every Year by CDR Chuck Sweeney, USN(Ret)

I try to attend the Tailhook Symposium every year for many reasons including the exhibits, panels and of course the comradeship. Hook '19, besides being a great success with record attendance, brought another significant reason to mind. I was spending time in the A-4, A-6 and A-7 hospitality room (imagine that) because it is a little quieter than some of the others. I also hang out there because it seems to attract Naval Aviators who not only flew various aircraft types, but in various eras. As I looked around on Thursday night, I noticed various groups congregated around tables listening to tales told by pilots I consider heritage pilots. I thought to myself that this was true Naval Aviation history and that it should be recorded.

I approached each of these men holding court with junior officers and their own peers and asked if they would be willing to break away for a photograph. A few quickly agreed while a couple asked why and gave me some static, which I expected. I waited for a while for them to line up for the photo, but nothing happened as they were having too much fun talking. I realized that to capture this moment, I had to take charge.

It was a little noisy, but when I yelled, "Attention, it is time to line up here for the legacy picture," they all stood up slowly. By this time, everyone in the room realized that this was history in the making and at least 25 cellphones came out of pockets to take pictures. Just as they lined up, a couple insisted that I line up with them. I tried declining, but I quickly realized that I was not going to win that battle. Plus a couple

CDR Chuck Sweeney, USN(Ret)

of them outranked me! I think we now have a tremendous legacy picture that captured some aviation legends together. Highlights from their careers reveal just how special a group it was.

CDR Curt Dosé, USN(Ret) shot down a Soviet colonel (their "Top Gunsy" instructor) flying a MiG-21 over Kep Airfield in 1972, in the first known contact with a new version of the *Fishbed*. Later he had the first recorded SA-7 *Strella* missile in Vietnam fired at his F-4 *Phantom II*. Curt and his father, CAPT Robert G. Dosé, are the only father and son with enemy aircraft kills. Curt took a tour of North Vietnam in 2016 with other U.S. pilots and met some of the North Vietnamese pilots he fought. The next year some of the North Vietnamese pilots came to San Diego for another gathering of former enemies.

RADM Don Shelton, USN(Ret) served on board USS *St. Louis* (CL 49) during the Battle of Leyte Gulf when the ship took four kamikaze hits. In Korea he flew F4U-5N *Corsairs* from multiple carriers in VC-3, logging 23 night interdiction missions and making a pre-dawn dead stick landing on board USS *Princeton* (CV 37). He also flew an F3H *Demon* to a flameout approach and landing at NAS Patuxent River, Md., in 1956. At Hook '19 he received the award for most straight-deck night traps and recognition for attending the first Tailhook Convention in Rosarito Beach.

CDR Theodore "TR" Swartz, USN(Ret) is best known for shooting down a MiG-17 on 1 May 1967, over Kep Airfield with a *Zuni* rocket fired from an A-4 *Skyhawk*. What many may not realize is that this wasn't just a lucky shot by an attack pilot. It was a well-executed kill by an experienced combat fighter pilot. He had flown the F3H, F-8 and F-4 prior to his A-4 tour.



Legacy aviators at Hook '19, from left: CDR Curt Dosé, USN(Ret), RADM Don Shelton, USN(Ret), CDR Theodore "TR" Swartz, USN(Ret), Col Bud Anderson, USAF(Ret), CDR Diz Laird, USN(Ret), CAPT Royce Williams, USN(Ret) and CDR Chuck Sweeney, USN(Ret).

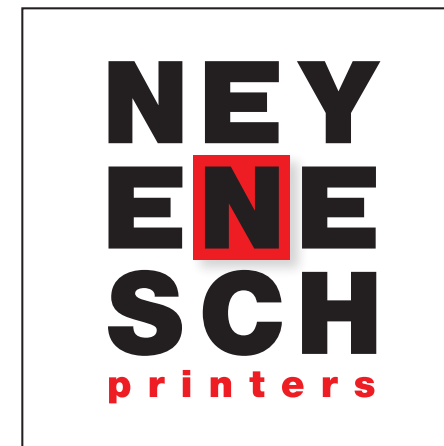
Col Bud Anderson, USAF(Ret) became a triple ace in World War II with 16.25 kills in the European theater, flying 116 combat missions. He flew 130 different types of aircraft—two of which were unique. As a test pilot he conducted the first *Project Tip Tow* flights in one of two F-84D *Thunderjets* attached at the wing tips of a B-29 *Superfortress* bomber. He also flew the XF-85 *Goblin* "parasite" fighter with no landing gear that was carried in the bomb bay of a B-36 *Peacemaker* and launched and recovered using a trapeze. He was a grade-school classmate of Tailhook stalwart Diz Laird, and they have remained lifelong friends.

CDR Diz Laird, USN(Ret) is the only WWII Navy ace (5.75 kills) to shoot down both German and Japanese aircraft. He flew the F4F *Wildcat* in the Atlantic theater and F6F *Hellcat* in the Pacific. He has flown 100 different aircraft types, the last a T-34C *Turbo Mentor* in which he flew as a passenger at NAS North Island in 2016. Diz went skydiving after his 90th birthday and plans to repeat it after his 100th birthday. He hopes to have some friends join him, and some of us signed a paper stating that we would. Diz was one of the principal pilots in the movie "Tora! Tora! Tora!" Ironically, he flew 164 hours in simulated Japanese aircraft during filming. Diz was a leader in the Tailhook Association for many years in the 1960s and 1970s.

CAPT Royce Williams, USN(Ret) flew F9F-5 *Panthers* with the VF-781 *Pacemakers* during the Korean War. Launched on a combat air patrol with three other pilots from USS *Oriskany* (CVA 34) on 18 November 1952, he expected a boring mission as there was minimal fighter activity. That changed quickly as the *Panthers* were vectored toward seven inbound Soviet MiG-15s. It was eventually determined that the *Pacemakers* splashed four MiG-15s in an intense dogfight, with Royce claiming at least three kills and bringing his badly damaged *Panther* back aboard *Oriskany*. He flew additional combat missions as a CAG during the Vietnam War.

CDR Chuck Sweeney, USN(Ret) entered the Navy in 1958 as an aeronautical engineer and while stationed at Patuxent River, future astronaut Jim Lovell convinced him to become a carrier pilot. He first flew the S-2E *Tracker* before eventually transitioning to the A-4F with VA-22. Later his shore tour with VA-127 was shortened 18 months by a quick reaction (13-day notice) deployment with VA-212 as executive officer in 1972. He was awarded three Distinguished Flying Crosses during that cruise for supporting the rescue of a squadronmate, as division lead on a strike near Hanoi and for leading an Alfa strike on a North Vietnamese target complex. He joined the DFC Society in 2001 and has been its national president for over a decade.

There were more heritage Naval Aviators at Hook '19, including former Chief of Naval Operations ADM Tom Hayward, MiG killer RADM Denny Wisely and others who I probably missed. Sometimes they are difficult to find because they might be manning booths or being stealthy. But there are some at every



remarkable quality and service

Tailhook, and you just need to find them and start a dialogue. You won't regret it. Be sure there is enough room for them to use their hands to add flying emphasis to their stories.

Reunions

Due to recent events, please check with the organizers before making plans or reservations.

F-8 CRUSADER REUNION-LACB 31—3-7 May 2020, Pensacola Grand Hotel, 200 East Gregory Street, Pensacola, Fla.; to register, please visit: <https://www.f8crusader.org>

NAS SANFORD—1942-1968 all units and squadrons—25-28 June 2020, Fleet Reserve Branch 147, 3040 West SR 46, Sanford Fla.; Debbie Ely, 309 Kimberley Court, Sanford, FL 32771, (407) 314-0201, Leasmom81@aol.com

USS HORNET (CV 8, CV, CVA, CVS 12)—72nd reunion all ship's officers, air groups, crew, Marines and families—16-20 September 2020, Millennium Hotel Buffalo, 2040 Walden Ave., Buffalo, NY 14225; Sandy Burkett, P.O. Box 108, Roaring Spring, PA 16673-9817, (814) 224-5063 or (352) 312-4976 (cell), hornetcva@aol.com

USS YELLOWSTONE (AD 27)—all ship's officers, air groups, crew, Marines and families—21-23 September 2020, Westgate Branson Woods Resort, Branson Mo.; Karen A. Bowen, 30 Briar Dr., Rochester, NH 03867, (603) 948-2821 or (352) 208-5400 (cell), pkbowen@atlanticbb.net

SQUADRONS AND SHIPMATES, INC.—Eleventh Annual Reunion—1-6 September 2020, Holiday Inn, Portland Airport, Portland Ore.; Al Wedermeyer, (859) 689-7001, squadronmates@aol.com



PROWLER ASSOCIATION

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Mission: The mission of The Prowler Association is to preserve and promote the legacy, history, and accomplishments of the EA-6B Prowler during its forty-three years of service. We honor those who flew, maintained, built, or supported the Prowler, and their families. We inform the public of the Prowler's contributions to America's military successes. We sponsor patriotic events, hold symposiums and fraternal gatherings, assist historic memorials to naval aviation, and in general foster the memory of the Prowler and do well for our members. We remember and honor deceased Prowlers and assist their families. Most importantly, we foster continued comradeship for members via our professional fraternity.

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THE WARRIOR'S BURDEN

by LtCdr "ENGINE EDDIE" Davidson

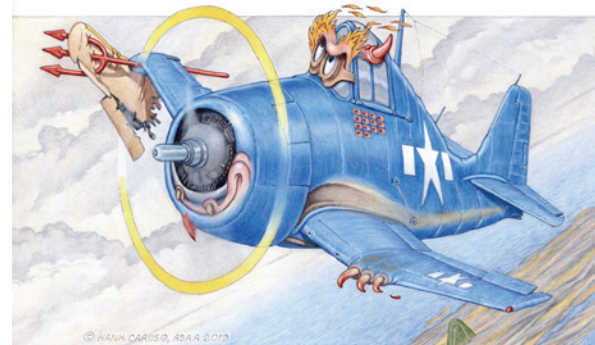


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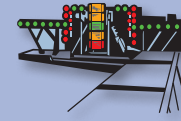


The all-color 2020 Aerocatures™ Calendar will include: C-141 Starlizard; GPS satellite; F6F Hellcat (shown); C-17 special ops mission; F-4D wheels-up landing; Navy Targets; F/A-18s on USS Gerald Ford; Topgun debrief; CH-53K & Naval Test Pilot School; SH-60 Seahawk family; Spitfire vs. Me-109. Calendar size 8.5" x 11. Color prints, merchandise, & commissions also available. Discount of 10% for orders of 5 or more calendars.

Calendar is a paltry \$20 each + \$5 S&H (US & Canada) per total order. Maryland residents add 6% SALES TAX. Prices for shipping outside the US and Canada and wholesale orders available on request. Not responsible for shipping damage. Sorry, no cash, CODs, or credit cards. Orders must be in US dollars redeemable through a US agent. Calendar will be available in September 2019.

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WAVEOFFS & BOLTERS



What is It?

by Mark Aldrich

The winter mystery plane elicited quite a few responses and most of them were correct. Thank you for playing the game.

The correct answer is the sole Boeing XF7B-1. With the success of their 1931 P-26 pursuit monoplane, Boeing designers embarked on a project meant to take the design to the next level by introducing retractable landing gear, an enclosed cockpit and a cantilever wing with no external bracing. The new airplane was given the Army Air Corps designation XP-29. The 1933 XF7B-1 was essentially a naval version of the XP-29. The design embodied a number of firsts. It was the first Boeing to be fitted with a controllable-pitch propeller before initial testing and the first to be fitted with flaps. The airplane was also the first low-wing cantilever monoplane submitted to the Navy as a carrier fighter.

National Archives



A rare photo of the Boeing XF7B-1 in flight with the landing gear retracted.

Naval test pilots criticized the high landing speed and lack of downward visibility, so the plane was returned to the factory for conversion to an open-cockpit configuration and the addition of a trailing edge split flap along the center section. After the modifications, the Navy still found that takeoff runs were too long and landing speeds too high to meet current standards. By 1938 when the Navy began looking at monoplanes to replace its antiquated biplanes, those standards were forgotten, and the XF7B-1 became a footnote in history as an example of a design that had been too advanced for its intended market.

Our staff randomly selected a reader with the correct answer for this issue. Congratulations to Richard Porcelli of Barnegat, N.J.

The spring 2020 mystery airplane is much newer and a part of the future of Naval Aviation. Be sure to include the manufacturer and correct designation of the aircraft at the time the photo was taken. There will be extra points given for the date and location of the photo.

Please keep your informative cards, letters and emails coming (Tailhook Association, 9696 Business Park Ave., San Diego, CA 92131-1643; thookmagazine@gmail.com). Please, no phone calls.



What is It?

THE LAST CUT

- CDR James C. Barnes, USN(Ret), Life
- Mr. James Barwick
- CAPT Raymond Benson, USN(Ret), Life
- LCDR Robert P. Blount, USN(Ret), Life
- LCDR Robert B. Brunson, USN(Ret), Life
- CAPT John J. Burkee III, USN(Ret), Life
- LT Virgil O. Campbell Jr., Life
- LT Peter Cartwright, USN
- LtCol Ross Chaimson, USMC(Ret), Life
- LCDR Russell C. Coit, USN(Ret), Life
- LCDR William Connell, USN(Ret), Life
- CDR J. Edward Craig, USN(Ret), Life
- Mr. Jerry A. Dickinson, Life
- CAPT Don L. Dostal, USN(Ret)
- CAPT Owen W. Dykema, USN(Ret), Life
- ADM Sylvester R. Foley, USN(Ret), Life
- Mr. Alan N. Halkett
- Lt Col John M. Kincade, USAF
- Col Ronald H. Lord, USAF(Ret), Life
- CAPT Lloyd L. Lund, USN(Ret), Life
- CAPT Richard J. Martin, USN(Ret), Life
- CDR Joseph G. Morrison, USN(Ret)
- CAPT Jeff Nelson, USN(Ret)
- Mr. John H. Parks, Life
- LCDR Ralph F. Parks, USN(Ret)
- CDR Robert D. Pfeifer, USN(Ret), Life
- CAPT Anthony Reade, USN(Ret)
- LCDR Donald R. Rogers, MD, USN(Ret)
- CDR Richard Schwartz, USN(Ret), Life
- ADM William H. Shawcross, USN(Ret), Life
- LT Al Simonsen, USN(Ret)
- CAPT Gordon G. Stewart, USN(Ret)
- LCDR Fred J. Wilder, USN(Ret), Life
- CDR Richard L. Wright, USN(Ret), Life

CALENDAR YEAR 2019 IN REVIEW

Compiled by LCDR Richard R. Burgess, USN(Ret) and Tom Kaminski

The following information reflects the official effective dates of the actions reported.

Ceremonial dates may differ from the official dates. All dates are 2019 unless otherwise indicated.

Aviation Units Established

- Fleet Logistics Medium Multi-Mission Wing, NAS North Island, Calif., 1 October

Aviation Units Deactivated

- VFA-101, Eglin AFB, Fla., 1 July (Ceremony 23 May)
- VMAQ-2, MCAS Cherry Point, N.C., 8 March

Aviation Units Redesignated

- Commander, Airborne Command & Control and Logistics Wing
Medium Tilt-Rotor Training Detachment to Commander,
Fleet Logistics Medium Multi-Mission Wing Training
Detachment 204, MCAS New River, N.C., 1 October

Aviation Units Relocated

- USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70) Home port change from NavBase Coronado, Calif., to NavBase Kitsap, Wash., 17 January
- USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74) Home port change from NavBase Kitsap to NavSta Norfolk, Va., 1 May
- USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) Home port change from NavSta Norfolk, to NavBase Coronado, 31 October
- USS America (LHA 6) Home port change from NavBase San Diego, Calif., to U.S. Fleet Activities Sasebo, Japan, 15 November
- USS Wasp (LHD 1) Home port change from U.S. Fleet Activities Sasebo, to NavSta Norfolk, 18 November
- VMFA-122 from MCAS Beaufort, S.C., to MCAS Yuma, Ariz., 17 November



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ON DECK

One Photograph's Tailhook Legacy

by Hill Goodspeed

The details of the photograph taken at Pearl Harbor on 27 May 1942 exude historical significance in the story of carrier aviation. The setting is the flight deck of USS *Enterprise* (CV 6), destined to be the most decorated ship of World War II, against the backdrop of superstructures of battleships and the cranes of salvage vessels rising over the hull of USS *Oklahoma* (BB 37), symbolic of the end of one era and birth of another in naval warfare.

The line of personnel in dress white uniforms receiving awards from Pacific Fleet commander ADM Chester W. Nimitz comprises commissioned officers with one exception, his enlisted rank not the most noticeable difference. African American Ck3 Doris Miller waits for the moment he steps in front of the admiral to have the Navy Cross pinned on his uniform for actions on USS *West Virginia* (BB 48) during the Pearl Harbor attack. Neither man knew that nuclear-powered aircraft carriers would bear their names, USS *Nimitz* (CVN 68) commissioned in 1975 and USS *Doris Miller* (CVN 81) planned as the fourth *Ford*-class carrier.

In addition to decorating Miller that day, Nimitz pinned the Distinguished Flying Cross on LT Roger W. Mehle for actions in a raid against the Marshall Islands on 1 February 1942, telling the young aviator, "I think you'll have a chance to win yourself another medal in the next several days." We now know that interceptions of Japanese coded messages had revealed a plan to strike Midway Atoll and draw out the Pacific Fleet's remaining carriers. In fact, the very day this photograph was taken, Nimitz promulgated OpPlan 29-42, which outlined his response to the enemy movements. One of the actions was to send

National Naval Aviation Museum

Enterprise, USS *Hornet* (CV 8) and their escorts to sea the next day, 28 May. USS *Yorktown* (CV 5), after hasty repairs of Battle of the Coral Sea damage had been completed, departed with her escorts on 30 May.

The men assembled on the deck in the photograph would play their own roles in the Battle of Midway. We can only guess the identities of the Sailors assembled in ranks, but perhaps they manned anti-aircraft guns or loaded bombs onto the TBD *Devastators* and SBD *Dauntlesses* that launched to attack enemy carriers.

Nimitz lived up to his words. LT Mehle led a section of F4F *Wildcats* defending *Yorktown* against Japanese dive bombers. The other aviators also saw action in Naval Aviation's landmark battle.

As Commander, *Enterprise* Air Group, LCDR C. Wade McClusky led SBDs in an attack against Japanese carriers. Finding only empty ocean as he reached the reported position of the enemy force, he engaged in a further search and happened upon the Japanese destroyer *Arashi* making high speed. McClusky and his charges followed the tin can straight to the enemy fleet. Among his pilots was LTJG Norman "Dusty" Kleiss (standing to Miller's right in the photograph), who planted his bomb on the carrier *Kaga* and in a later attack put another bomb into *Hiryu*. LTJG Cleo J. Dobson, who in the photograph is receiving the Distinguished Flying Cross from Nimitz, served as the Assistant LSO on board *Enterprise*, helping bring planes aboard during the course of the battle.

Of course, they knew nothing of what was to come on that sunny day, their shadows stretching across planks of the *Big E*, but the legacy they left inspires tailhookers who followed.



VFA-192 Golden Dragons Squadron and Detachment Patches

During their 75-year history the VFA-192 *Golden Dragons* had six distinct squadron designations and many colorful and creative patches for various assignments. We share a small sampling from each.



VF-153
1945-1947



VF-15A and VF-151
1947-1950



VF-192
1950-1956



VA-192
1957-1986



VFA-192
current



Shoulder patch
with squadron motto "SSHWFGD"



Low-visibility patch
used since 1990



50th Anniversary
1995



Operation Southern Watch
1992



Last cruise of
USS *Independence* (CV 62)
1998



55th Anniversary
2000



Redeployment to the continental
United States from Japan
2009

Paul Newman collection



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